The Problem of History in the Temporal Ethics of Henri Bergson, Emmanuel Levinas and Gilles Deleuze

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Declaration of Authorship

I, David Ventura, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ethics of relating oneself to temporality that emerges in the philosophies of Henri Bergson, Emmanuel Levinas and Gilles Deleuze. Focusing on Bergson's, Levinas' and Deleuze's respective suggestions as to how an ethical relation to a time of novelty is effectuated, this thesis argues that each of those ethical models retains a problematic relation to history, and that a potential resolution to this problem is only found in Deleuze and Guattari's joint work. Starting with an exploration of Bergson's metaphysical writings, this thesis argues that Bergson's conception of intuition remains insufficiently attuned to that practice's implication with the domain of history, and that this presents a problem for Bergson's ethical philosophy. The thesis then turns to Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* to argue that this text, despite seemingly historicising the intuition, in fact fails to provide a resolution to the problem of history that announces itself in Bergson's metaphysical writings. Motivated by these failures in the Bergsonian *oeuvre*, this thesis then turns its attention to two self-professed Bergsonians, Levinas and Deleuze, to consider the extent to which their respective ethical philosophies can be said to provide a resolution to the Bergsonian problem of history. Exploring Levinas' temporal ethics in *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, I argue that Levinas remains incapable of providing such a resolution, for his own ethical philosophy remains decidedly caught up in a problematic relation to history, and that despite Levinas' explicit claims that his ethics transcends the historical. I then turn my attention to Deleuze, to argue that despite remaining (like Levinas) unable to resolve this problem in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze does indeed offer a potentially fruitful way of negotiating it in his joint work with Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

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Abbreviations

This list of abbreviations only includes references to the standard English translations of the most frequently cited works in this thesis. All other works used (including additional texts by Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze) have been cited in the footnotes using the author-date system.

Works by Henri Bergson:

CE *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Dover Publications, 1998).

CM *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle Andison (New York: Dover Publications, 2007).

ME *Mind-Energy*, trans. Wildon Carr (London: Palgrave, 2007).

MM *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Paul and Scott Palmer (London: Zone Books, 1988).

TFW *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: Dover Publications, 2001).

TSMR *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Bereton (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).

Works by Emmanuel Levinas:

EE *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1978).

MSe "Meaning and Sense", trans. Alphonso Lingis (ed.), *Collected Philosophical Papers* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987).

OB *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

ON "The Old and the New", trans. Richard A. Cohen, *Time and the Other [and additional essays]* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), pp. 121-138.

S "Substitution", in Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (eds.), *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 79-96.

TI *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979).

TO *Time and the Other [and Other Essays]*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987).

Works by Gilles Deleuze (including with Félix Guattari):

AO *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

ATP *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

B *Bergsonism,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Zone Books, 1988).

DR *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

HRS "How do we Recognise Structuralism", trans. Michael Taormina, in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), pp. 170-192.

LS *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

NP *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

Works by other authors:

ATVM Jacques Derrida, **"**At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am", trans. Ruben Berezdivin and Peggy Kamuf, in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Volume 1* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 143-190.

BMT Max Horkheimer, "On Bergson's Metaphysics of Time", trans. Peter Thomas, *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 31, 9-19.

MS Félix Guattari, **"**Machine and Structure", trans. Rosemary Sheed, in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews, 1955-1971* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2015), pp. 318-329.

VM Jacques Derrida, **"**Violence and Metaphysics", in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 79-153.

Introduction

This thesis explores the ethics of relating oneself to temporality that emerges in the philosophies of Henri Bergson, Emmanuel Levinas and Gilles Deleuze. Focusing on Bergson's, Levinas' and Deleuze's respective suggestions as to how an ethical relation to a time of novelty is effectuated, this thesis argues that each of those ethical models retains a problematic relation to history, and that a potential resolution to this problem is only found in Deleuze and Guattari's joint work. As this project's opening salvo, this Introduction sets itself four main tasks. I begin, in section one, by briefly exploring the philosophical context that underpins this thesis. Having introduced this context, in section two I provide an explanation and overview of my aims in bringing together the ethical philosophies of Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze in this project. In section three, I then offer a methodological clarification on the thesis' central terms, before considering its main theoretical contributions in section four.

1. Context: Bergsonian openings

Despite its relative fall from grace in the early twentieth century, Henri Bergson's philosophy has recently had something of a revival in Anglophone continental philosophy. In part due to Gilles Deleuze's unorthodox and largely laudatory readings of this philosophy in texts like *Bergsonism*, *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*, Bergson has re-emerged as a central figure for thinking about the nature of temporality and humanity's relation to it.[1] Bergson's philosophy is now seen by many as providing a fruitful way of thinking time in *its own terms*, that is, without the common sense mediations of space, language and matter. Particularly with his conception of time as duration, Bergson is said to offer a way of thinking temporality that not only goes beyond the "mundane" conceptions of time (clock-time, object-time, linear-time, etc.) that traditionally govern our everyday lives, but which also

[1] Deleuze (1986, 1989) is not solely responsible for Bergson's renewed prominence. As Giuseppe Bianco (2011: 858) notes, "the use of Bergson's model of irreversible temporality in Ilya Prigogine's and Isabelle Stengers' work on dissipative systems, the success of the neurosciences, the crisis of phenomenology and the search for alternative philosophical sources has also resulted in a serious historical and exegetical analysis of Bergson's work."

"reconceptualises, and complicates, our understanding of life in its open-ended and unpredictable becoming."[2] Similarly, Bergson's notion of intuition—with its suggestions for immediately reconnecting human beings with the durational becoming from which they find themselves so habitually distracted—is now taken by many scholars as proposing an invaluable practice for not only making "both thought and action more subtle", but also for *affirming* the "interconnectedness of being in its temporal embeddedness".[3]

This renewed focus on Bergson's reflections on time and the intuition has led some scholars to identify an *ethical* promise or "challenge" in the Bergsonian *oeuvre*.[4] As Leonard Lawlor clarifies, this challenge "does not concern moral prescriptions or moral theories, it concerns the relation of thought to the unthought."[5] In other words, following the definition of ethics provided by prominent figures like Michel Foucault and Deleuze, the challenge that presents itself in Bergson's writings has less to do with the rational or normative values that ought govern society than with the alternative "modes of existence" by which ethical subjects relate themselves to *difference*.[6] Ethics here refers to the mode of "conduct" by which subjects begin to *expose* themselves to a singular dimension of alterity and becoming.[7] And on such a definition of ethics, the contribution made by Bergson's philosophy is clear. By simultaneously thinking time as becoming and by advocating that human beings actively (and intuitively) relate themselves to such becoming, Bergson's "philosophy of creative evolution can be shown to be an 'ethical' one, concerned with opening up the human experience to a field of alterity."[8]

This 'return to Bergson' has in many ways been a positive phenomenon.[9] Philosophically, it has led to a welcome re-evaluation of Bergson's decisive influence on some key twentieth-

[2] Grosz, 2004: 12; cf. Connolly, 2011: 77.
[3] Connolly, 2011: 2; Grosz, 2004: 13; cf. Ansell-Pearson, 1999: 20-77; Ansell-Pearson, 2002: passim; Lorraine, 2011: 6-12.
[4] The latter expression is used by Leonard Lawlor in his important *The Challenge of Bergsonism* (2003: 60-79).
[5] Lawlor, 2003: 62.
[6] cf. Foucault, 1990: 3-32; Foucault, 1997: 253-280; Deleuze, 1988: 17-29.
[7] cf. Foucault, 1990: 25-32; DR 1.
[8] Ansell-Pearson, 1999: 2; cf. Mullarkey, 1999: 158.
[9] "A Return to Bergson" is the title of Deleuze's 1988 Afterword to the American edition of *Bergsonism*. B 115-118.

century philosophical figures like Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas, Gilles Deleuze, and even Jacques Derrida, Georges Canguilhem and Foucault.[10] Practically, or at least at the level of political theorising, this attentiveness to Bergson has also contributed to a renewed consideration of how a pluralist politics seeking to challenge conventional, identity-based political activity might benefit from the development of an ethical relation to temporality such as is suggested by Bergson's writings.[11] Influential political theorists like William E. Connolly and Elizabeth Grosz have been at the forefront of this political deployment of Bergson's ethical thought.[12] Inspired by the conception of intuition provided by Bergson in texts like *The Creative Mind* and *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, both Connolly and Grosz argue that fostering Bergsonian intuitive practices might lead political agents to develop a more positive relation to the temporal difference that is so constitutive of politics. Bergson's intuition, these theorists argue, provides us with a method for politically or ethically "belonging to time as becoming."[13]

The productive effects of such reconsiderations and redeployments of Bergson certainly cannot be denied. Nevertheless, and once again perhaps due to Deleuze's largely *salutary* readings of Bergson, contemporary scholarship's attention to the ethical promise of Bergsonism has not always been met with a concomitant interest in its potential *problems*.[14] Despite the historical existence of many rigorous and persuasive critiques of Bergsonian intuition, for instance, few philosophical commentators have contended with the implications such critiques might hold for their repeated ethical valorisation of the intuition. In his recent monograph on Bergson, Keith Ansell-Pearson, for example, despite showing some

[10] For studies on Bergson's philosophical legacy, see for example: Ansell-Pearson, 2018: 87-90; Bianco, 2011: 855-872; Bianco, 2015: passim; Descombes, 1998: passim; Fradet, 2014; Guerlac, 2006: 173-196; Gutting, 2010: 63-77; Gutting, 2011: passim; Lawlor, 2012: 15-37, passim; Massey, 2015; Pilkington, 1976; Richmond, 2008: 77-95; Somers-Hall, 2017: 85-107.
[11] Widder, 2008: 2.
[12] cf. Connolly, 2005: 97-130, 161-170; Connolly, 2011: 1-15, 102-106, 115, 166-168, passim; Grosz, 2004: 13-14, 155-243; 243-261; Grosz, 2012: 147-152.
[13] Connolly, 2011: 10.
[14] An exception to this tendency is Nathan Widder's (2008: 1-4, 40-49, 89-91; cf. 2012a: 127-146) work, which, drawing on Nietzsche and Deleuze, variously argues that Bergson's philosophy fails to open up a conception of time *qua* absolute novelty.

awareness of the critiques of Bergson advanced by Critical Theorists like Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, ends up avoiding any sustained consideration of such criticisms, saying nothing of their potential implications for the success of Bergson's attempt to think 'beyond' the human condition.[15]

The neglect of such critiques also marks the aforementioned politico-theoretical work seeking to deploy Bergson for radical political purposes. Despite variously insisting, as noted above, that Bergsonian intuition offers subjects a valuable and novel perspective on life and temporality that exceeds our common sense view of the world, political theorists have generally failed to contend with critiques of Bergson (such as the one developed by the late Levinas) suggesting that his ethical method of intuition may in fact tend towards the replication of "old" forms of knowledge.[16] Connolly, for example, insists that engaging the intuition or "[d]welling in duration [productively] affects the sensibilities through which we act."[17] But he does not pause to consider the extent to which that practice *itself* may reinforce or replay 'old' ways of thinking and acting. Given Connolly's otherwise sophisticated analysis of the ideological coding that perception undergoes under the determined conditions of capitalism, this failure to engage such critiques feels like a missed opportunity for a balanced reflection on the ethical promises of Bergson's intuitive thought.[18]

This at times uncritical valorisation of Bergson has also somewhat overshadowed the importance of the ethical moves *away* from the intuition that are made by some of Bergson's most significant philosophical successors. Deleuze's philosophy in particular has been widely read in contemporary scholarship as primarily intuitive, and that despite Deleuze's

[15] Ansell-Pearson, 2018: 87-88. Other Bergson scholars have likewise hinted at these critiques without providing any substantive (Lundy, 2013: 19-20), or indeed robust (ter Schure, 2019: 111-116), engagements with them. In some cases, the critiques have gone altogether unmentioned (Lawlor, 2003; Guerlac, 2006).
[16] ON 121-138. Levinas' critique has received more sustained attention than the one put forward by Critical Theorists, with both Lawlor (2003: x, 62-63; 2005: 175-184) and John Mullarkey (1999: 157-187) seemingly taking it seriously. However, Levinas' *substantive* critical points remain unmentioned in other works (Ansell-Pearson, 2018: 2; Guerlac, 2006: 185n47).
[17] Connolly, 2005: 166.
[18] cf. Connolly, 2011: 43-67.

relatively infrequent usage of that concept post-*Bergsonism*.[19] In her recent study of *Deleuze and Guattari's Immanent Ethics*, for example, Tamsin Lorraine argues that Deleuze's late ethics should be understood in terms of Bergson's method of intuition, and that to be ethical for Deleuze (and Guattari) is to develop "an intuition of the time of Aion".[20] Now, it would of course be foolish to deny that Bergson remains a decisive influence on Deleuze. That said, and *pace* Lorraine, to suggest that Deleuze's ethical philosophy remains thoroughly intuitive is not only to ignore that philosophy's distinctiveness, but is also to gloss over the disparateness of its privileged ethical modalities.

From an inverse angle, because the recent 'turn' to Bergson has mostly proceeded through a Deleuzian lens (with the stress on 'immanence' that usually tints it), there has also been a generalised lack of scholarly recognition that Bergson's philosophy has historically been taken up in a variety of directions—some decidedly less immanent than Deleuze's own appropriation.[21] Alongside Deleuze, Levinas stands as another major figure in European philosophy whose own ethics remains strongly inspired by Bergson's emphasis on temporal creativity and novelty. Indeed, as Levinas states in a now famous interview with Richard Kearney, alongside Heidegger and phenomenology, Bergson was the figure who had the most decisive influence on his own intellectual trajectory.[22] This influence has of course not gone completely unnoticed by Bergson scholars.[23] But where those scholars are usually content to supplement their studies of Bergson with an extensive focus on Deleuze, the same attention has not always been given to Levinas, despite the fact that Levinas' own explicit attempts to develop an ethical philosophy (of time) that goes beyond—*by responding*

[19] Much recent literature has focused on emphasising the continuities between Bergson's and Deleuze's thought. See, for example: Alliez, 1998: 226-246; Ansell-Pearson, 1999: 20-76, 139-208; Boundas, 1996: 81-106; Bryant, 2008: 49-72; Grosz, 2007: 287-300; Lundy, 2010: 67-85; Lundy, 2017: 174-194; Sholl, 2012: 544-563.
[20] Lorraine, 2011: 22, cf. 1-30.
[21] In this project, I largely leave aside the much-debated question of whether Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze are best classified as thinkers of 'immanence' or 'transcendence'. I do not find those labels particularly useful for clarifying the complexity of those three ethical philosophies, all of which, moreover, seem to me to contain *both* immanent *and* transcendent moments at various stages of their development. For discussions of this debate that remain sensitive to this complexity, see: Gutting, 2011: 117-132; Lawlor, 2003: 60-63; Lawlor, 2005: 175-184.
[22] Levinas and Kearney, 1986: 17.
[23] cf. Ansell-Pearson, 2018: 2; Lawlor, 2003: 60-63; Mullarkey, 1999: 157-187.

to—Bergson's own philosophy would seem to offer a useful counterpoint to Deleuze's highly idiosyncratic account of Bergson.[24]

In my view, Levinas and Deleuze *both* stand in a similarly *ambivalent* relation to Bergson, insofar, that is, as they both remain inspired by Bergson's ethical emphasis on relating subjects to a time of novelty and futurity, *whilst* also departing from Bergson's more specific ethical pronouncements on the intuition.[25] This shared ambivalence, I contend, makes both of their philosophies a fertile ground for tackling the problems that arise in Bergson's thought. Deleuze's work on intensity *and* Levinas' focus on the Other must both be taken as providing promising theoretical routes out of the problems of Bergson's ethical philosophy, and any work dealing with those problems must also contend with the ethical promises that are offered by both Levinas' and Deleuze's thought. And it is with this philosophical context—and opportunities it presents—in mind that I propose to explore the connections between Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze in this thesis.

2. Aims and overview: temporal ethics and the problem of history

The connections between the ethics of Bergson, Levinas, and Deleuze are certainly complex and multifaceted. It is also clear that much important work remains to be done in clarifying the philosophical relations between these three profoundly ethical thinkers—especially on the Bergson-Levinas and Deleuze-Levinas sides of this triangle.[26] That said, in this thesis I do not aim to provide a traditional account of Bergson's 'influence' on Levinas

[24] Widder (2008: 40-49), for example, argues that Bergson's philosophy of time remains incapable of thinking discontinuity, but only considers Bachelard and Deleuze as two "options" out of this problem, leaving aside any consideration of Levinas' explicit arguments against Bergson that "[t]here must be a rupture of continuity" (TI 283-284).

[25] To my knowledge, only Lawlor (2003: 61-63; 2005: 175-184) seriously acknowledges that Levinas and Deleuze both stand on an equally ambivalent footing in relation to Bergson.

[26] Beyond a select number of short articles and chapters, relatively little has been written on the Bergson-Levinas connection. For some examples, see: Caygill, 2002: 5-68; de Warren, 2010: 174-200; Durie, 2010: 371-392; Harold, 2009: 63-80; Lawlor, 2005: 175-194; Paley, 2017: 304-318; Peters, 1997: 9-16; Veulemans, 2008: 279-302.

Studies on the Levinas-Deleuze connection also remain sparse. For a few examples, see: Gutting, 2011: 117-132; Kouba, 2008: 74-96; Lawlor, 2005: 175-194; Rae, 2016: 279-303; Schroeder, 2012: 251-266; Sparrow, 2013: 22-42; Ventura, 2020; Williams, 2005: 33-52.

and Deleuze's respective philosophies. Studies of influence can easily turn into discourses on the similarities between profoundly disparate thinkers, even when the textual evidence does not justify such assimilation.[27] That is why in this thesis I have chosen to devote little attention to what is explicitly 'common' between Bergson, Levinas, and Deleuze. Neither my Levinas nor my Deleuze emerge here as particularly *intuitive* (in the Bergsonian sense) philosophers, even if I agree that they each take up Bergson's ethical injunction that, as human subjects, we have a certain responsibility to relate ourselves to the temporality of the new.

Instead, in this project I have opted to engage these thinkers through their *differences*, focusing specifically on what unites Levinas and Deleuze with Bergson at precisely those junctures where they most explicitly *depart* from the latter's ethical emphasis on the intuition. In my view, this strategy gives this thesis two main strengths vis-à-vis a more traditional comparative exercise. First, this allows me to spend more time articulating what is *distinctive* about Bergson's, Levinas', and Deleuze's respective ethical models—and as we will see throughout, there are indeed important differences between them. Secondly, if there is a problem 'common' to these three ethical philosophies—and this thesis contends that *there is*—then this is a problem that emerges in each case for different reasons and as a result of divergent motivations. Even if Deleuze and Levinas are both inspired by Bergson to think how we can positively and ethically relate ourselves to a time of novelty, that inspiration is always refracted through differing concerns and strategies. In eschewing extended comparisons between these three thinkers, my hope is that this thesis is able to better capture their singular differences, whilst nonetheless providing some indication of what unites them *through* those differences.[28]

This thesis also does not attempt to provide an extensive overview of Bergson's,

[27] The aforementioned 'intuitionist' readings of Deleuze exemplify this issue well.
[28] In all this, I am inspired by the following methodological assertion made by Deleuze and Guattari: "The history of ideas should never be continuous; it should be wary of resemblances, but also of descents or filiations; it should be content to mark the thresholds through which an idea passes, the journeys it takes that change its nature or object." ATP 235.

Levinas' and Deleuze's respective conceptions of time. Much excellent work has already been carried on this front for all three thinkers considered here, and this thesis does not position itself as a contribution to the subset within the literature dealing specifically with their respective ontological or metaphysical conceptions of time.[29] Thus, although each chapter of this thesis aims to provide some account of what Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze each respectively means by time (or temporality—I use these terms interchangeably throughout), these accounts are by no means novel, and they are not where this project makes its central contribution.

Instead, this project directs its central attention to Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze's respective models of *temporal ethics*. In other words, I focus on how, for each of these thinkers, an ethical relation to a time of novelty, difference, becoming and alterity is *effectuated*.[30] I study their respective suggestions as to how a relation to the time of the new is established to ask specifically what the relative merits of each of those ethical conceptions is, particularly with regard to the way in which they position themselves in (dis)continuity with the realm of *history*.[31] Once again, however, my focus on this question of temporal ethics—on the question of how a relation to the time of novelty and futurity is effectuated—is not primarily genealogical or filiational. Beyond their shared interest in directing ethical subjects to the time of the new, I do not seek to 'trace' what Levinas' and Deleuze's respective conceptions of temporal ethics owe to Bergson's intuitive ethical philosophy.

In place of such genealogical work, this thesis sets itself a critical task. In direct response to the aforementioned reluctance within recent scholarship to confront the *problems* with

[29] For studies of Bergson's conception of time, see: Ansell-Pearson, 2002; Ansell-Pearson, 2018; Grosz, 2004; Guerlac, 2006; Lawlor, 2003; Mullarkey, 1999.

For similar studies on Deleuze, see: Ansell-Pearson, 1999; Somers-Hall, 2013: 55-95; Widder, 2008; Williams, 2011.

Finally, on Levinas, see: Cohen, 1987: 1-27; Large, 2015; Mensch, 2015; Severson, 2013.

[30] The notion of 'effectuation' might be seen as too 'active', and thus as collapsing what is distinctive about Levinas' brand of temporal ethics, namely, its emphasis on the subject's *passivity* in relation to the temporality of the other person. However, as we will see in chapters three and four, for Levinas, though we are in a certain sense passive to the Other, that passivity nonetheless finds its condition of possibility—or "*effectuation*"—in certain structures (TI 280). In this regard, it makes sense to speak of ethics as *effectuated* in Levinas, as in Bergson and Deleuze. For Levinas' use of the term, see: TI 196, 212, 280, 291, 297; OB 24, 35, 179.

[31] I will have more to say on what I mean by history shortly.

Bergson's intuitive philosophy, this is exactly what this thesis seeks in the first instance to do. I seek to explore, that is, why Bergson's conception of intuition might not quite (or not *immediately*, at least) provide the ethical solution to the human predicament that he otherwise so correctly identifies. I believe there is something immensely valuable in Bergson's suggestion that, as human beings who move and live in time, we have much to gain from more closely relating ourselves to the temporal aspects of our existence. I concur that a "methodically cultivated and developed" attention to novelty can stimulate and revivify those habitual aspects of our everyday lives that would otherwise remain so stagnant and static.[32] I also agree with Bergson that social impulses and conventions (like language) have historically tended to *prevent* the creation of this positive and enlivening relation to the new.[33] Where I part ways with Bergson is in thinking that socio-historical assemblages *necessarily* act as such an impediment to an enlivening or ethical contact with the novelty of time. The social, it seems to me, is as much a place of blockage as it is "a place of passage."[34] Additionally, Bergson's philosophy seems to me to put undue faith on the capacity human beings have for *divorcing* themselves from those determined forms of sociality that have historically constituted them. While it is certainly not impossible that we might become capable of relating ourselves to a time that is *other than* the 'social' or 'habitual' time of clocks, meetings and measurements, it seems to me unfeasible to suggest that such a relation could ever be *immediate* in the particular sense *of leaving all traces of the social and the historical behind*. It seems to me that an ethical relation to time cannot simply consist of a complete 'turn away' from the socio-historical domain.

Yet, as the first chapter of this thesis shows, it is precisely this turn away from the social that Bergson's metaphysical writings recommend when speaking of the intuition.[35] For Bergson, the intuition is the immediate vision, contact, apprehension or knowledge that the mind has of time *qua* duration. Now, this vision, contact, apprehension or knowledge is

[32] CM 79.
[33] CM 62.
[34] ATP 323.
[35] cf. Lawlor, 2003: 61-62.

immediate in the precise sense that it leaves the prismatic *mediations* (or "interposed prejudices") of the social behind.[36] Intuition "is the direct vision of the mind by the mind—nothing intervening, no refraction through the prism, one of whose facets is space and another, language."[37] In other words, for Bergson, it is precisely by leaving behind our socio-historically determined perceptive impulses—or our 'action-oriented perception'—that we can begin to feel ourselves intuitively moved by the temporal novelty of duration.

Now, as I have noted, I think there is something profoundly inspiring in Bergson's claim that we should seek to immediately relate ourselves to the time of the new. Nevertheless, as I argue in this thesis' first chapter, while this move is ethically inspiring, it also remains deeply problematic. For as Bergson's own metaphysical writings define it, the method of intuition can be shown to remain *constitutively contaminated* or *implicated* with precisely that socio-historical domain that Bergson so variously casts as an impediment to an ethical or vivifying contact with time *qua* duration. As we will see, because the intuition takes shape as a method for knowing duration, it always finds itself constitutively affected by other forms of knowledge that themselves play an eminently 'social' function. And the content of those functions is, of course, *historically* determined.

This not only entails that the intuition is not as immediate as Bergson suggests. If the intuition finds itself constitutively implicated with the social, then far from being freed from any and all social 'prejudice', intuitive knowledge can itself tend towards a *replication* of the very social impulses and conventions that have historically prevented humanity from directly engaging duration. And it is here, I contend, that history starts to become a *problem* for Bergson's temporal ethics. For if, through its constitutive involvement with the socio-historical domain, the intuition can itself tend towards a replication of those conventions that have traditionally separated us from duration, then to be successful, that method—or indeed, temporal ethics itself—clearly needs to find a way of *dissociating* itself from that tendency. Insofar as it can *reinforce* humanity's separation from duration, the constitutive implication

[36] CM 3.
[37] cf. CM 20.

between Bergson's temporal ethics and history here presents itself as a *problem* to be resolved or negotiated.

Broadly speaking, I believe there are two types of philosophical 'solutions' that can be offered to this problem that announces itself in Bergson's metaphysical writings. On the one hand, we can continue to go down the route of immediacy first suggested by Bergson, by trying to further *remove* or *isolate* temporal ethics from its involvement with the historical. In my view, this is the resolution that Levinas and the early Deleuze both try to offer in response to this problem. In both cases, this resolution involves creating a new concept of immediacy. Take the following assertions by Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*: "The notion of contact does not represent the primordial mode of the immediate. Contact is already a thematisation and a reference to a horizon. The immediate is the face to face."[38] What appears to be at stake in Levinas' claim here is that in order to *truly* reach an immediate relation to the new—and the new for Levinas *is* the face-to-face relation with another person—we must go *further down* the route of immediacy than Bergson's notion of intuition is capable of going.[39] We must think immediacy beyond its horizon-laden signification *qua* intuitive contact (or vision), precisely so that we can establish an ethical relation to time that does not simply ensure the "signification of things within the same."[40] Similarly, when in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze speaks of the eternal return as the power that affirms difference by placing differences "into immediate relation to one another", it seems to me that he is also trying to go further than Bergson on the question of immediacy.[41] And once again, this move is clearly reflected in his temporal ethics, which, far from remaining intuitive, models itself instead on the thought of eternal return. And as we will see in chapter five, one of Deleuze' implicit criticisms of Bergson in this move towards the eternal return is that the latter's temporal ethics has not quite been able to fully "abjure" its empirical or historical

[38] TI 52.
[39] "The absolutely new is the Other." TI 219.
[40] TI 191.
[41] DR 119.

content, and that, in that sense, it remains caught up with "the Same and the Similar."[42]

On the other hand, we may seek to resolve this problem by *accepting* that historical factors inevitably have a constitutive role to play in temporal ethics, and that the success of such an ethics depends on a careful *negotiation* of the risks that follow from that inevitable implication. In my view, this is the solution that Bergson's penultimate major text, *The Two Sources*, begins to open up. In that text, Bergson seemingly recognises that the success of any ethics attempting to relate itself to the new must contend with its *own* connection with—indeed, even find its "support" on—a range of factors that have a decidedly historical edge, such as the transmission of ideas through static language and large-scale, industrialised mechanism.[43] Deleuze, it seems to me, also takes up this second route in his later work with Guattari. Specifically in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari firmly recognise that any ethical project for connecting subjects with a temporality of becoming must necessarily involve itself with those stratified social formations that most directly bind us as human beings.[44] Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari, only by directing our attention to such socio-historical assemblages can we ensure that our temporal ethics does not simply tend towards the replication of those forms of social organisation that have historically prevented an alignment with the new.[45]

In this thesis, beyond initially pointing to the problem of history that emerges in Bergson's metaphysical thought, I also want to consider the respective merits of each of the 'solutions' I have just mentioned. I want to assess, that is, not only whether Bergson's *Two Sources* is capable of developing a *less problematic* conception of temporal ethics than his metaphysics, but also whether Levinas' and Deleuze's respective solutions to this problem fare any better. I begin this endeavour, in chapter two, by turning my attention to Bergson's *The Two Sources*. As I read it, this text attempts to show how the intuition can play a concrete ethical function in developing a form of social organisation that is more attuned to the force of the

[42] cf. DR 87-89.
[43] TSMR 309.
[44] ATP 159, 134.
[45] ATP 161.

new—or what Bergson calls "the open society".[46] As just noted, this text also seems much more willing to accept that the success of this ethical project depends on the *support* it receives from the determined historical factors of language and mechanism. In this sense, *The Two Sources* appears to promise a conception of temporal ethics that is more thoroughly *historicised* than the one found in Bergson's metaphysical writings—an ethics that takes shape, as Frédéric Worms argues, "without at any time leaving the field of human history for that of a transcendent metaphysics."[47]

In chapter two, I want to consider whether *The Two Sources* in fact delivers this more historicised conception of temporal ethics. It seems to me that were the text to provide such a conception, it perhaps would also contain some valuable suggestions as to how we might begin to *dissociate* the Bergsonian method of intuition from its tendency to replicate those social impulses that have historically prevented humanity from engaging the novelty of duration. However, as I will argue in chapter two, while this solution's promise is indeed signaled in *The Two Sources*, it is not in fact *delivered* by it. On my reading, Bergson's penultimate text continues to frame the intuition as an ethical practice that is purified from any *constitutive* involvement with the concrete manifestations or accretions of the historical. To engage the intuition is still, for Bergson, to immediately relate oneself to time "beyond these manifestations."[48] In this sense, I contend, *The Two Sources* remains incapable of offering an adequate resolution to the problem of history that emerges in Bergson's metaphysical writings. The question that Bergson fails to answer in continuing to frame the intuition as immediate is how that ethical method can *divest* itself of its tendency to replay those historical forces that have traditionally prevented humanity from reaching a contact with time *qua* duration.

These failures in the Bergsonian oeuvre prompt my turn to Levinas in the next two chapters of the thesis. It cannot be denied that Levinas' ethical philosophy significantly

[46] TSMR 267.
[47] Worms, 2004: 86.
[48] TSMR 101.

departs from Bergson's intuitive framework.[49] Though Levinas remains, like Bergson, very much interested in the question of how we might immediately relate ourselves to the temporality of the new, this immediate relation is no longer thought at the level of a *practice*—much less an intuitive one—that we can engage ourselves in as ethical subjects.[50] As Levinas pithily writes in a 1967 essay, to ethically reach the singularity of time it is "not enough to supress spoken discourse and abandon oneself to duration", as Bergson would have it.[51] For Levinas, an ethical relation to a time of novelty must instead be thought in terms of our immediate *passivity* or *exposure* to the alterity of the Other person: "The absolutely other [*Autre*] is the Other [*Autrui*]."[52]

In terms of my central focus in this thesis, I believe that the main promise presented by Levinas' thought consists of its repeated insistence that temporal ethics *can* take place entirely *beyond* history. As Levinas famously writes in *Totality and Infinity*, "[w]hen man truly approaches the Other he is uprooted [*arraché*] from history."[53] Otherwise said, for Levinas, the possibility of a temporal ethics that does not find itself implicated with the historical remains a live one. Now, if Levinas is correct on these points, and if the model of temporal ethics he provides in texts like *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being does* manage to avoid a constitutive implication with the historical, then perhaps this ethical thought also offers a fruitful route out of the problem of history that presents itself in Bergson's intuitive philosophy. Perhaps, Levinas offers us a model of temporal ethics that is no longer constitutively involved with a tendency to replay or replicate those historical arrangements that "obscure" and do "violence" to essential novelty of time.[54]

My central task in chapters three and four of this thesis is to determine whether Levinas'

[49] For more on this departure, see: Veulemans, 2008: 279-302.
[50] I engage with Levinas' critique of Bergsonian intuition in chapters one and three.
[51] Levinas, 1987a: 114.
[52] TI 39. The English word 'other' can be rendered into French as both *autre* and *autrui*. Where the latter connotes the more familiar sense of another human person, and particularly of a neighbour, the former more readily refers to something that is different or alien, without any necessary human predicate. Levinas uses these terms somewhat interchangeably, but in this thesis, and in accordance with standard translations of Levinas, I will attempt to distinguish *autre* from *autrui* by rendering the latter as Other.
[53] TI 52.
[54] cf. TI 220-247.

ethical philosophy in fact delivers on this promise. Turning my attention to *Totality and Infinity*, in chapter three, I argue that this text's model of temporal ethics does not—Levinas' explicit claims notwithstanding—manage to entirely absolve itself from a constitutive implication with the historical. As I read him, despite arguing that an ethical relation to the temporality of the Other is immediate, Levinas also holds that this relation finds its condition of possibility in certain ontological structures. Namely, it finds its possibility in the two ontological conditions for the individuation of the ethical subject, which Levinas respectively calls *interiority* and *fecundity*.[55] Directing my specific focus to the ontological condition of fecundity, I argue in chapter three that Levinas' model of temporal ethics in *Totality and Infinity* remains caught up with the historical because it continues to ground itself on a situation that carries with it an eminently historical aspect: the situation of the family, which, for Levinas, precisely captures the distinction of the ontological condition of fecundity. I argue that if temporal ethics remains grounded in the family, as Levinas' account implies, then that ethics cannot entirely absolve or uproot itself from history, for the family, as I will show in chapter three, remains in each of its aspects *historical*.

Driven by *Totality and Infinity*'s inability to resolve the problem of history, in chapter four, I turn to Levinas' second major work, *Otherwise than Being*, to test the feasibility of its own claims that temporal ethics can take place entirely beyond "the recuperable time of history and memory in which representation continues."[56] *Otherwise than Being* significantly revises some of the central themes of *Totality and Infinity*. Significantly, in the later text, Levinas drops the claim that the immediacy of temporal ethics finds itself grounded in certain *ontological* conditions. Although *Otherwise than Being* continues to uphold a certain condition "at the basis" of its proposed model of temporal ethics—an ethics which is now conceived by Levinas in terms of the subject's immediate *proximity* to another person, or neighbour—that condition is no longer conceived ontologically, but *ethically*.[57] Indeed, for the

[55] cf. respectively: TI 107-183, 240-285.
[56] OB 89.
[57] OB 19.

Levinas of *Otherwise than Being*, it is no longer the ontological conditions of interiority and fecundity that explain the possibility of an ethical relation to the temporality of the Other. That grounding role is now performed by what Levinas calls the "superindividuation" of the subject in the *thoroughly ethical* condition of substitution.[58]

Taking up and extending my argument in chapter three, in chapter four, I contend that Levinas' temporal ethics in *Otherwise than Being*, despite its explicit and repeated claims to the contrary, remains constitutively implicated with the historical. The main issue, as I conceive it, is that despite distancing the 'basis' of temporal ethics from all ontological predicates, Levinas nonetheless continues to deploy a range of gendered metaphors that suggest precisely that basis' involvement with the historical. As we will see, Levinas continues to describe the ethical condition of substitution in terms of the familial metaphor of *maternity*. Thus, while it cannot be denied that *Otherwise than Being* introduces many significant changes into Levinas' conception of temporal ethics, in the final analysis, that ethics remains incapable of providing a resolution to the problem of history that suggests itself in Bergson's thought. Far from showing how the project of temporal ethics can take place entirely beyond history, Levinas' ethical philosophy not only remains constitutively implicated with history. Because it effectively and repeatedly *disavows* this implication, Levinas' philosophy also fails to offer any positive suggestions as to how the risks that follow from that it might become *strategically* negotiated.

Given these inadequacies in Levinas' thought, in the last two chapters of the thesis, I turn my attention to Deleuze to see how much better his own solutions to the problem of history fare. I begin by focusing on the *magnum opus* of Deleuze's early solo period, *Difference and Repetition*, to investigate whether its ethical model for the affirmation of eternal return is indeed capable of liberating itself from any involvement with the historical. As I have already suggested, for the early Deleuze, to think temporal ethics in terms of the affirmation of eternal return is precisely 'abjure' that ethics' constitutive involvement with any

[58] OB 118.

historical or empirical content. When the ethical subject affirms the eternal return, Deleuze tells us, it also 'frees' itself from all those events that make up the content of historical time: "it repudiates these and expels them with all its centrifugal force" and, as such, it itself becomes "the new, complete novelty."[59]

However, as I show in chapter five, there is good reason to doubt Deleuze's confidence that his model of temporal ethics is capable of liberating itself from all sense of the historical. As I seek to show by taking up and extending Guattari's critical reading of Deleuze's solo philosophy, to operate in the way Deleuze proposes, his model of temporal ethics needs to relate itself much more closely to the domain of actuality than he is willing to admit. As we will see, Deleuze frames his notion of temporal ethics in structuralist terms: for him, the affirmative activity of the 'Self' of eternal return must be understood in terms of the notion of a *differenciator* towards which the structuralist philosophy of figures like Claude Levi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan begins to point. However, I argue that in framing temporal ethics in these terms, Deleuze fails to recognise that what provides a structural agent of that nature with its affirmative force is *precisely* its involvement with the historical. In this sense, I maintain, to function in the way Deleuze proposes, his ethics of affirming the eternal return must retain a constitutive involvement with historical factors—an involvement which Deleuze ultimately fails to recognise, and which thus prevents him from providing an adequate solution to the problem of history.

Motivated by Deleuze's inability to resolve this problem in *Difference and Repetition*, in this project's final chapter, I turn my attention to Deleuze and Guattari's joint work. As I have already suggested, this co-authored philosophy seems to me much more willing than Deleuze's solo work to recognise the importance of the historical for the project of ethics. This recognition already expresses itself in the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, where the authors suggest that ethical movements of escape always *simultaneously* involve

[59] cf. DR 88-90.

concrete forms of social *investment*.[60] This recognition arguably comes to its full fruition in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where the authors provide a machinic model of temporal ethics that not only recognises the constitutive implication between the ethical and the historical but also suggests how we might—as ethical subjects—*strategically negotiate* the risks and opportunities that this implication creates. Deleuze and Guattari recognise that insofar as it remains constitutively implicated with concrete forms of social investment, the project of temporal ethics is as potentially enlivening as it is *dangerous*. And that is why the authors suggest that to ethically relate ourselves to the new, we must remain equally attentive to our involvement with those stratified forms of actuality that constitute us as human subjects.[61] Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari, it is only by *meticulously* relating ourselves to our stratified historical conditions that we can prevent our temporal ethics from lapsing into its tendency to reproduce and replicate those forms of social organisation that separate us from the new.

My argument in the last chapter of this thesis is that, of the all works considered here, *A Thousand Plateaus* offers the best solution to the problem of history that emerges in Bergson's writings. In my view, by actively confronting the constitutive implication between temporal ethics and the historical, Deleuze and Guattari are also able to develop a convincing ethical strategy for negotiating the risks that follow from that implication. That is, unlike Bergson, Levinas and the early Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari are able to offer valuable suggestions as to how we might, as ethical subjects, *vigilantly dissociate* the project of temporal ethics from its tendency to replicate and reproduce problematic forms of social organisation. To be sure, as Deleuze and Guattari remind us, there can be no guarantees here, since even a vigilant temporal ethics can fall back into the dangers of replication.[62] But in recognising these dangers, and in actively folding this recognition into their model of temporal ethics, Deleuze and Guattari offer us a potentially productive way of negotiating the risks that can be associated with the project of relating oneself to the new. And it is in this

[60] *Anti-Oedipus* rhetorically affirms: "what is not escape *and social investment at the same time?*" AO 341.
[61] ATP 161.
[62] "This is not reassuring, because you can botch it." ATP 149.

sense, I contend, that their ethics offers a valuable resolution to the problem of history that announces itself in Bergson's intuitive philosophy.

3. Terms: problems and histories

My explorations in this thesis are methodologically guided by two key concepts, neither of which finds its proper home in Bergsonism. First, I am loosely guided by Jacques Derrida's late conception of a *problem* as that which brings about the *return*—or the *revenance*—of what it attempts to conjure away. As Derrida writes in *Spectres of Marx*, a problem is not to be defined exclusively as a task to be resolved through 'inquiry'; it can also be defined as a kind of *protection* or *shield* against 'external' or 'impure' influences: "*problema*: at once question, task, program, *and* shield, the apotropaic armour, armour against armour".[63] It seems to me that when Bergson, Levinas, and (the early) Deleuze consider the relation between their temporal ethics and history, that they treat history as a problem in these two senses identified by Derrida. On the one hand, determined forms of history and actuality present an issue that must be dealt with or resolved philosophically through the development of a notion of immediate temporal ethics. At the same time, it seems to me that this conceptual working out also tries to *shield* or *protect* the task of temporal ethics from a mixing with the 'impurities' of the historical. In trying to provide an account of temporal ethics grounded in immediacy, Bergson, Levinas, and (the early) Deleuze all likewise try to "conjure away" what they perceive to be the 'negative' influence of the historical.[64] But this philosophical act of conjuration, like all conjuration, always causes that which it attempts to exorcise *to come back*, to *return*. In this sense, I suggest, we should not be surprised that the problem of history re-emerges in Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze's ethical philosophies at those exact moments where they most explicitly try to dispel it by articulating a notion of immediate temporal ethics. For such attempts, as Derrida says,

[63] Derrida, 2006: 175.
[64] "Problematisation is careful to disavow and thus to conjure away (we repeat, *problema* is a shield, an armour, a rampart, as much as it is a task for the enquiry to come)." Derrida, 2006: 207.

"always cause to come back, they convoke the *revenant* [in this case, the history] that they conjure away."[65]

Secondly, when throughout this project I speak of 'history', 'actuality', 'empirical' or 'determined states of affairs' and 'stratifications', I am in each case inspired by Michel Foucault's concept of actuality (*actualité*).[66] This concept, developed by Foucault in his later writings on Kant, denotes a form of sociohistorical reality, a "contemporary reality", that is never simply an aggregate of all that exists or all that has come to be through a gradual or teleological process of historical accumulation.[67] Neither is actuality, *qua* contemporary reality, simply a frozen and immobile moment in time that offers no routes for escape (no "way out") towards the future.[68] Our actuality, according to Foucault, *does* refer to concrete historical processes: it refers specifically to the historical "contingency that has made us what we are".[69] But this historical contingency is not simply the static chain of events that have led to our 'present'; it is not simply our 'history' as it may be written in traditional textbooks and chronicles. In opposition to these traditional conceptions of history, Foucault's actuality refers instead to a *mobile* form of historical contingency that always contains within it "the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think."[70] In other words, for Foucault, actuality refers to our concrete historical situation (our 'now' or 'today'), but *as already predisposed towards alteration or the future*: "'today' *as* difference in history."[71]

Like Foucault, I agree that history should not be reductively defined as a static series of events that have become frozen in time. I think the concept of history can, and should, encompass within it the sense of *opportunity in relation to the future* that is conveyed by Foucault's notion of actuality. I also believe that it is only by *accepting* such a notion of

[65] Derrida, 1994: 175.
[66] For a concise summary of Foucault's conception, see: Gilson, 2014: 10-12.
[67] Foucault, 1984: 34.
[68] Foucault, 1984: 34
[69] Foucault, 1984: 46.
[70] Foucault, 1984: 46.
[71] Foucault, 1984: 38.

history and by *taking up* the opportunities that it presents, as it were, that we can successfully make sense of the task of temporal ethics that is so valuably insisted upon by Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze. I hold that to successfully relate ourselves to the future, we must see history not as an *obstacle* to be overcome or escaped through ethics, but rather as that contingent milieu (consisting of both opportunities and dangers) that precisely *enables* us to go towards another time, towards a time that is different to our own 'present', other than our presence to ourselves. It is this milieu, moreover, that we cannot fail to *contend with* if we want to ethically free ourselves from our static or illusory conceptions of time without, *at the same time*, having our ethics *replay* or *replicate* the dangers and violence that follow from such conceptions. Indeed, as Foucault recognises (and I believe the remainder of this thesis will bear out the truth of this remark), "the claim to escape from the system of contemporary reality so as to produce the overall programs of another society, of another way of thinking, another culture, another vision of the world, has led only to the return of the most dangerous traditions."[72]

All that said, when in this thesis I deal with Bergson's, Levinas', and Deleuze's respective models of temporal ethics, I do not criticise each of those models for failing to live up to this conception of history *qua* actuality that emerges in Foucault's late writings. I do believe that some of the dangers that follow from each of those models could perhaps have been avoided, or at least better negotiated, through the adoption of a more nuanced conception of history—and indeed, one of my arguments in relation to Deleuze and Guattari in chapter six is that their philosophy provides a potential resolution to the problem of history in part because it adopts one such conception of history.[73] For the most part, however, my use of terms like 'history', 'actuality', and 'determined states of affairs', remains *contextually* or *parasitically* attached to what Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze respectively mean by history. As a way of doing justice to those three philosophers, in each of my chapters, I work with the

[72] Foucault, 1984: 46.
[73] In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 111-113) themselves point to the significance of Foucault's notion of actuality. And I believe that the spirit of that conception also informs their ethical philosophy in *A Thousand Plateaus*, particularly with its claim that our concrete territorial assemblages operate are sites of *both* closure *and* openness, or passage. ATP 323.

conception of history that is presented by the text(s) I am in the process of analysing. In this sense, my critical task in this thesis is not to suggest that the various models of temporal ethics I explore are problematic simply because they fail to take up Foucault's notion of history *qua* actuality. Rather, my task is to suggest that *even as they themselves define history*, history can be shown to remain a constitutive part of Bergson's, Levinas' and Deleuze's respective conception of temporal ethics. And it is in *this* sense that history emerges as a problem in each of those ethical philosophies. In each case, history re-emerges as that impurity with which temporal ethics cannot entirely do away. And that is why, I argue, a successful temporal ethics is one that seeks to contend with its own constitutive implication with the historical, one that tries to strategically use that domain as the contingent milieu consisting of both opportunities and dangers that enables us to go beyond ourselves, in the 'here and now'.

4. Theoretical contributions

What, then, are this thesis' main contributions to the literature? As the first book-length study exploring the relation between Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze's ethical thought, this thesis will make a welcome contribution to the sub-field of continental philosophy exploring the connections between these three thinkers. This subset of the field is certainly burgeoning. But as I mentioned above, there is still a relatively limited amount of work exploring the philosophical links between Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze. And although my thesis does not engage itself in detailed genealogical work, my hope is that it still clarifies aspects of this philosophical triangle in a way that bolsters the ongoing debate within the literature.

To my knowledge, there is also nothing to date in the field attempting to explore these three profoundly ethical thinkers from the perspective of a *problem* that they might all share. If my arguments that Deleuze's, Levinas' and Bergson's respective models of temporal ethics all share a problematic relation to history are in any way convincing, then beyond extending already ongoing debate, this thesis also makes a novel contribution to that debate

by providing an extended exploration of the problematic overlap between these three ethical philosophies. And again, my hope is that this contribution leads to a more expanded and balanced debate on the philosophical and ethical opportunities that are presented by the ethical philosophies of Bergson, Levinas, and Deleuze.

Finally, and perhaps more incidentally, I believe that this thesis will also bolster the ongoing debate in political theory seeking to determine how our political lives might benefit from the development of an ethical relation to time. As I hope to show throughout this thesis, although that ethical task is certainly to be welcomed, because it remains constitutively implicated with our concrete forms of actuality, that task presents not only opportunities but also risks or dangers that must be negotiated strategically. In this sense, then, this thesis also functions as a reminder that the political or ethical task of relating oneself to temporality always demands a great degree of *prudence*. As well as contributing to the philosophical literature dealing with the relationship between Bergson, Levinas and Deleuze, this project therefore also hopes to enrich the ongoing debate within political theory as to how we might be able to pluralise and diversify the ethical domain of our political lives.

1. Bergson I: the problem of history in Bergson's metaphysical writings

As I wrote in the introduction to this thesis, Henri Bergson's metaphysics aims to establish a way for human beings to retrieve the novelty and creativity of time. According to Bergson, the habitual or everyday life of human beings is characterised by its distraction in relation to the temporal forces that constitute life itself. Because we are continually engaged in the work of society, and because that work always demands of us a thoroughly spatialised conception of the world, we seldom stop to expose ourselves to the temporality that is the very principle of life in general. As Bergson writes in a lecture from 1911, for the most part "we have no interest in listening to the uninterrupted humming of life's depths. And yet, that is where real [time or] duration is."[1] Although this lack of interest in duration is certainly the cause of many "false" philosophical problems, for Bergson, its negative effects also have a much wider reach than the field of philosophy.[2] In a certain sense, by continually ignoring the creative force of duration through habitual social practice, we also estrange ourselves from the most fundamental aspect of our existence *qua* living beings. We divorce ourselves, that is, from that "perpetual state of becoming" that we *are* beneath the spatiality of all our social or linguistic representations.[3]

For Bergson, we can begin to rectify our estrangement from the fundamental temporality of life only by adopting a *method* for knowing or grasping duration. This method is precisely what Bergson calls the "intuition".[4] Intuition is that effort, or that series of efforts, whereby we begin to immediately grasp time without any refraction through the distorting prisms of language and spatiality that govern our habitual social interactions.[5] Bergson's claim is that

[1] CM 125.
[2] CM 46-50.
[3] TFW 130; CM 103.
[4] Bergson's conception of the intuition as a philosophical "method" already appears in one of his earlier pieces on the subject of metaphysics, namely, in his 1903 "Introduction to Metaphysics" (CM 155). But as Bergson (1972: 1146-1150) notes in a famous letter to Harald Höffding, the real significance of this conception only became clear to him "long afterwards." Its most sustained elaboration is to be found in the opening sections of Bergson's second introduction to *The Creative Mind*: CM 18-72.
[5] CM 29.

by engaging in this method we can immediately reconnect ourselves with the novelty of time *qua* duration. This effort of reconnection with duration can, moreover, play a dual function. In one sense, the intuition can help us dispel certain philosophical problems that have hitherto plagued the history of philosophy. More widely, the intuition can also become more than a mere philosophical tool. Though Bergson does not—at least until the *Two Sources*—often speak of it in these terms, it is clear that the intuition can also play a positive *ethical* role in expanding the domain of our lives.[6] It can become the means by which we begin to "revivify [*revivifie*]" the stability that sociality continually imposes upon our interaction with the world.[7] In this sense, Bergson's contention is that the intuition provides the occasion for human beings to overcome their merely social condition and to once again immediately realign themselves with the temporal principle of life itself.[8]

But if Bergson is sanguine about the potentialities that are offered by the intuition for immediately reconnecting human beings with duration, there is also, following some of his prominent critics, some reason to doubt the plausibility of these claims. As Levinas, for example, argues, although the philosophical significance of Bergson's emphasis on duration cannot be underestimated, we must nonetheless ask whether the intuition in fact operates as an *immediate* opening on "absolute newness".[9] The main issue, as Levinas conceives it, is that in continuing to associate the intuition with the modalities of knowledge, grasping, and vision, Bergson's thought remains still too closely attached to a philosophical tradition whereby "*the alterity* of the new is reduced to its *being*", that is, where temporal alterity is approached not in its own terms, but rather in terms of an ontological framework that divests time of its essential futurity.[10]

From a different, though not unrelated angle, Bergson's conception of intuition has also

[6] As Pilkington (1976: 165) aptly phrases it: "There is an ethical quality in Bergson's thought on this, since it becomes an imperative to retain as great a degree of consciousness and freedom of action as possible."
[7] CM 131-132.
[8] TFW 97.
[9] ON 133.
[10] ON 133.

come under scrutiny by Critical Theorists, like Max Horkheimer, who suggests that in positing intuition as an unmediated or immediate contact with duration, Bergson remains insufficiently aware of that method's *constitutive* implication with social and historical factors.[11] According to Horkheimer, though it cannot be denied that Bergson's philosophy "towers above most philosophical phenomena of the present", at least on these points pertaining to the relation between intuition and history (or the social), that philosophy remains relatively "naïve".[12]

Taking inspiration from each of these critiques, in this chapter I want to test Bergson's claims that the intuition enables us to *immediately* relate ourselves to the novelty of duration. Combining aspects of both Horkheimer's and Levinas' critiques, I want to argue that this method is not as freed from social and historical factors as Bergson would have us believe. Paying particular attention to Bergson's own methodological stipulations in metaphysical writings like *The Creative Mind*, I contend here that the intuition always remains *constitutively implicated* with its surrounding social and historical field of actuality. In this sense, not only is the intuition *not* the immediate or unrefracted relation to time that Bergson envisages. Because the intuition remains constitutively implicated with social and historical factors, it can also become a means by which the impulses and prejudices that govern those other domains are *replicated* at the level of ethical practice. And it is in this sense, I contend, that history emerges as a *problem* in Bergson's metaphysical writings.

I develop this argument in three main stages. I begin, in section one, by briefly outlining Bergson's conception of duration, before considering his arguments as to why our social perception habitually separates us from it. In section two, I turn my attention to Bergson's conception of intuition, focusing in particular on his definition thereof as a method for the acquisition of knowledge of duration. In section three, I begin by considering why this method can be said to contain an ethical dimension, before arguing (with the help of

[11] As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, despite receiving a direct response from Bergson himself (2002: 1491-1492), Horkheimer's critique has not always been given the attention it deserves in Anglophone Bergson scholarship.
[12] BMT 10, 12.

Horkheimer and Levinas) that even *qua* ethical, this method always finds itself constitutively implicated with determined forms of actuality. Having made this argument, I conclude by restating why this constitutive implication presents a problem for Bergson's ethical philosophy, whilst also recapitulating the two potential solutions that may be given in response to it.

1.1. Time as duration

In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson begins to develop his account of time as duration by distinguishing between two different types of "multiplicity".[13] According to Bergson, these two kinds of multiplicity are "two possible senses of the word 'distinguish', two conceptions, the one qualitative and the other quantitative, of the difference between *same* and *other*."[14] They are, in other words, the two principles according to which the elements in a series can be distinguished from one another. Quantitative—or discrete—multiplicities treat the elements in a series as identical or homogenous units that occupy separable positions in an equally homogenous and divisible space.[15] This kind of multiplicity can be subjected to a process of counting or addition. When we count sheep, for instance, we not only take them, for the purposes of the addition, as identical, but we also "place them side by side in an ideal space".[16] As Bergson writes, "the process by which we count units and make them into a discrete multiplicity (…) assume[s] that they are identical, which is conceivable only on condition that these units are ranged alongside each other in a homogeneous medium."[17] Thus, if quantitative multiplicities assume an identity between their elements, this is because they take the idea of a homogeneous and infinitely divisible space as their "fundamental datum".[18]

[13] TFW 75-139.
[14] TFW 121.
[15] TFW 86-87
[16] TFW 76-77.
[17] TFW 123.
[18] TFW 99.

As Bergson warns, however, not everything is counted in the same way, and if we have a tendency to quantitatively connect the elements in series, we can also combine them in accordance with their *quality*.[19] The discrete sounds of a distant bell, for example, can also be combined as a function of their *overall rhythm*: "in that case, I do not *count* the sounds, I limit myself to gathering, so to speak, the qualitative impression produced by the whole series."[20] Though consciousness usually directs itself towards objects quantitatively, it is also capable of being confronted by quite another type of multiplicity. When consciousness refrains from *spatially* representing its sensuous elements, it encounters each of them "permeating the other and organising themselves like the notes of a tune, so as to form what we shall call a continuous or qualitative multiplicity".[21] Such qualitative multiplicities, Bergson argues, are "nothing but a succession of qualitative changes, which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, without any tendency to externalize themselves in relation to one another, without any relation to number: [they are] pure heterogeneity."[22] In contrast to quantitative multiplicities, qualitative multiplicities are thus defined by the lack of homogeneity and identity between their elements and instead by an interpenetration of their distinct moments.[23]

According to Bergson, these two types of multiplicities also present "two possible conceptions" that the mind can take on *time*.[24] When we speak of temporality we tend to think of it as a quantitative multiplicity: "we generally think of a homogeneous medium in which our conscious states are ranged alongside one another as in space."[25] Under this view, our perception of time is taken as equivalent to our perception of external objects in space. But since we can also relate to the world on the basis of its quality, this quantitative

[19] In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson takes the latter process as primary in relation to the former: "without this interpenetration and this, so to speak, qualitative progress, no addition would be possible. Hence it is through the quality of quantity that we form the idea of quantity without quality." TFW 123.
[20] TFW 86.
[21] TFW 105.
[22] TFW 104.
[23] As Bergson notes, in qualitative multiplicities one can hardly even speak of 'elements' at all, since any distinction between them is only acquired via a process of symbolic representation. TFW 86.
[24] TFW 100, 128.
[25] TFW 90.

view of time is by no means the only one possible. Indeed, for Bergson, the purely symbolical character of this quantitative conception of time "becomes more striking as we advance further into the depths of consciousness: the deep-seated self which ponders and decides, which heats and blazes up, is a self whose states permeate one another".[26] When consciousness is made to "isolate [*isoler*] itself from the external world, and by a vigorous effort of abstraction, to become itself again", it finds that its temporality is *in fact* that of a qualitative multiplicity.[27] Consciousness discovers that "pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states."[28] In this context, the quantitative view that we normally take on time emerges as nothing more than a spurious concept that distorts the *fundamentally qualitative* reality of both consciousness and the living world more generally. At its heart, all life is *durational*.[29] Above all, this means that rather than taking shape as the juxtaposition and homogeneity of discrete temporal states, the temporality of life is instead a perpetual state of becoming, a becoming where there is nothing but a ceaseless continuity of change and creativity.[30] Life, as duration, is "a wholly qualitative multiplicity, an absolute heterogeneity of elements which [continually] pass over into one another."[31]

But on Bergson's reading, it is precisely this living continuity of becoming that we, as human beings, are generally incapable of grasping.[32] While even our daily experience should teach us that it is duration, and not a spatialised time, that "immediately" presents itself to consciousness, we are for the most part content to let the latter representation

[26] TFW 126.
[27] TFW 91, 128.
[28] TFW 100.
[29] *Time and Free Will* ascribes a reality to duration only in the context of individual consciousness. But in *Creative Evolution* this durational reality is expanded onto the domain of life itself. TFW 99; cf. CE 1-11.
[30] CE 2.
[31] TFW 229.
[32] Bergson consistently presents the inability to engage with duration as a properly *human* problem, doing so on the basis that other forms of life, lacking intelligence, almost certainly perceive the external world otherwise than we do. TFW 96, 138; CE 137-176.

govern our perceptive encounters with not only the world but also with ourselves.[33] Bergson explains in *Matter and Memory* that this tendency to regard the world spatially finds at least part of its reason in our existence as *living* beings. As he argues, even the humblest of living forms must sustain themselves in order to live. But they cannot do so except by distinguishing, from the continuity of the world's sensible qualities, "a body which is to be their own and then [subsequently] other bodies with which the first can enter into relation."[34] To live, living forms must thus distinguish themselves from the greater continuity of life, since only this discernment enables them to *act* in the world, or to follow "the fundamental law of life, which is a law of action."[35] In human beings, this vital necessity most readily expresses itself in terms of our *perception* of the external world: "Our representation of matter is the measure of our possible action upon bodies: it results from the discarding of what has no interest for our needs, or more generally, for our functions."[36] This vital need for action also in part determines the form and function of specific human faculties, like that of the intellect.[37] As Bergson argues in *Creative Evolution*, when we, as intelligent beings, act upon a material object, "our interest is directed, before all, to its actual or future positions, and not to the *progress* by which it passes from one position to another, progress which is the movement itself."[38] In a similar way, when as intelligent beings we attempt to fabricate such objects—and fabrication is the "first" aim of the human intellect—our attention is primarily directed to their apparent *solidity*, while "the rest escapes by its very fluidity."[39] In the context of this demand for activity that governs all life in general, it is not hard to grasp why human beings are normally content to let spatialised representations dominate their engagement with both the world and themselves. For beings like ourselves, who are determined by a necessity for action, to discern and carve out spatialised solidities from the continuity of

[33] TFW 125, 128.
[34] MM 198.
[35] MM 150; cf. CE 128-129.
[36] MM 38.
[37] "We regard the human intellect (…) are relative to the needs of action. Postulate action, and the very form of the intellect can be deduced from it." CE 152.
[38] CE 154.
[39] CE 153.

becoming is, in a certain sense, just what it means to *live*.[40]

This necessity for action that in part determines all living perception takes up a properly *human* specificity in a social setting.[41] "In reality," Bergson writes, "man is a being who lives in society."[42] Now, in order to take shape as a *common* way of living, social life requires a certain degree of *stability* and *regularity*.[43] In human societies, both of these aspects are provided by language.[44] As Bergson notes, it is "the word with [its] well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind."[45] Put differently, the words and concepts of language operate as a kind of "mold" within which the heterogeneity of life can be temporarily fixed.[46] Consciousness can get a handle on the fluidity of its experience of flavour, for example, by giving it a name and thus solidifying it in the shape of a *taste*.[47] It is this process of linguistic fixing, moreover, that not only enables consciousness to compare its sensations to one another in time, but which also enables the "whole of society" to get a sense of its shared experiences.[48] Now, in itself, this process of symbolical representation is relatively innocuous. Indeed, for Bergson, this process can even play a productive role in human society, insofar as the fabrication and modification of material objects, for instance, calls for a divisible and discontinuous representation of parts that language is well equipped to provide.[49] In a more abstract sense, and in part because language is precisely a power for *abstraction* from things, language has even contributed to the "liberation" of human

[40] MM 198.
[41] MM 184-185.
[42] CE 157.
[43] "Our tendency to form a clear picture of the externality of things and the homogeneity of their medium is the same as the impulse which leads us to live in common and to speak." TFW 138.
[44] Though *Time and Free Will* exclusively equates language with stability, *Creative Evolution* develops a more ambiguous conception thereof by insisting that "mobility" is inherent to words (CE 157-161). Even so, Bergson refuses to consider that the mobility of language might itself provide an entry into the more generalized fluidity of duration. Even *qua* mobility, language always continues to cover up duration by turning it into a thing. cf. CM 141.
[45] TFW 132; cf. CM 62-63.
[46] CE 160, 314.
[47] TFW 131.
[48] TFW 133, 236.
[49] "Now, to modify an object, we have to perceive it as divisible and discontinuous." CE 162; CM 63.

consciousness: it has enabled consciousness to remove itself from the material objects to which it would otherwise remain riveted, and to thus develop a reflection on itself.[50]

The issue that emerges is that human consciousness displays an almost instinctive tendency to understand its own temporal becoming—and that of life more generally—on the basis of static or social linguistic categories.[51] As Bergson holds in *Time and Free Will*, the "influence of language on sensations is deeper than usually thought. Not only does language make us believe in the unchangeableness of our sensations, but it will sometimes deceive us as to the nature of the sensation felt."[52] By relating to itself through the language that permeates society, consciousness deceives itself into thinking that its inner temporal reality is that of a quantitative multiplicity.[53] In this way, Bergson contends, we spend the greater part of our time living "outside ourselves, hardly perceiving anything of ourselves but our own [linguistic] ghost, a colourless shadow which pure duration projects into homogeneous space." [54] Through language, we prevent ourselves from grasping the durational heterogeneity that constitutes our inner experience; we divorce ourselves from our "fundamental self [*moi fondamental*]."[55] Similarly, Bergson contends in *Creative Evolution,* because we are habituated to engaging with the material world through linguistic concepts that "have the same stability as objects, on which they have been moulded", we also have a tendency to believe that those concepts can adequately represent the mobility of life more generally.[56] Nevertheless, it is an "undeniable" fact that life unfolds itself in its heterogeneity gradually and continually, "as if it occupied a duration like our own."[57] But in deploying static social symbols as a way of grasping that heterogeneity, the human intellect cannot but show

[50] CE 158-159, 177-178; Ansell-Pearson, 2018: 166.
[51] As early as *Time and Free Will*, Bergson contends that "our intellect has its instincts." We will see in the next chapter that Bergson extensively revisits this theme in *The Two Sources*. TFW 134-135.
[52] TFW 131.
[53] "This imaginary homogenous time is (…) an idol of language." MM 207.
[54] TFW 231.
[55] TFW 128.
[56] CE 160.
[57] CE 9.

itself as having "*a natural inability to comprehend life*."[58] By its use of linguistic symbols, "the intellect represents *becoming* as a series of *states*, each of which is homogeneous with itself and consequently does not change."[59] But what this process of symbolical representation leaves out is the essential temporal mobility and heterogeneity of life itself. By relating itself to the living world on the basis of its social representations, human consciousness allows temporal becoming and creativity to slip through its fingers just when it thinks that it is holding it tight.[60]

Bergson contends that this almost instinctive tendency to engage with life's temporality via social representations gives rise to a number of "false" philosophical problems.[61] In *Time and Free Will*, for example, Bergson maintains that that "the contradictions implied in the [philosophical] problems of causality, freedom, personality, spring from no other source."[62] *Creative Evolution*, for its part, contends that for as long we continue to think evolution on the basis of static social categories, we will remain "incapable of presenting the true nature of life, the full meaning of the evolutionary movement", and our speculation will thus continue to rely on false categories—like "nothingness" and "disorder"—that serve a purpose only in relation to practical activity.[63] In short, what our tendency to relate to the world on the basis of social categories prevents is an engagement with reality as it is *in itself*.[64] What we remain incapable of grasping or following is "the internal life of the structure of things."[65] In this particular sense, if our knowledge bears a certain relativity, this is "simply due to the fact that the intelligence has contracted habits necessary for everyday living; these habits, transferred to the domain of speculation, bring us face to face with a reality [that is only] distorted or

[58] CE 165.
[59] CE 163.
[60] CE 163.
[61] For Bergson's most succinct account of 'false' problems, see his lecture on "The Possible and the Real": CM 77-86; cf. CE 272-370; Deleuze, 2002: 13-36.
[62] TFW 139.
[63] CE ix-x, 102, 298.
[64] "Spatiality, therefore, and in this quite special sense, sociability, are in this case the real causes of the relativity of our knowledge." CM 16.
[65] MM 183.

made over".[66] Crucially, these sorts of philosophical problems are not the only ones that emerge from our tendency to relate to time on the basis of social representations. Because we are of the same "essence" or "substance" as the mobility that works on all living things, by placing our static representations between that mobility and ourselves, we also, in a certain sense, divorce ourselves *from* ourselves.[67] We divorce ourselves, that is, from the mobility and becoming that we *are*, and we therefore radically separate ourselves from "that [durational] heterogeneity which is the very ground of our experience."[68]

Fortunately, this habit of distorting durational reality on the basis of social categories "does not force itself upon us irresistibly; it comes from ourselves; what we have done we can undo; and we can enter then into direct contact with reality."[69] To achieve this, however, we cannot simply limit ourselves to rectifying this or that aspect of our normal thought. "You must take things by storm: you must thrust intelligence outside itself by an act of will."[70] That is, in order to "recover" the duration of which we are composed, we must seek to find ways of "isolating" its mobility from the homogenous space onto which our social life has projected it.[71] As Bergson clarifies in *Matter and Memory*, however, this task does not consist of the merely "chimerical enterprise to try to free ourselves from the fundamental conditions of external perception."[72] To live we must perceive. But a perception based solely on our practical needs is not the only one possible. That is why, as Bergson puts it in *Creative Evolution*, in order to rectify the problematic tendencies of our thought, "we must accustom ourselves to think being directly, without making a detour (...). We must strive to see in order to see, and no longer to see in order to act."[73] In other words, we must seek to develop new ways of *immediately* perceiving duration *in isolation* from the mixture of abstraction and

[66] CM 17; MM 184-185.
[67] CM 103; CE 39.
[68] TFW 97.
[69] CM 17.
[70] CE 193.
[71] TFW 129.
[72] MM 187.
[73] CE 298.

spatialisation that it receives in our habitual, everyday experience.[74] And to achieve this alternative perception of duration, we have no choice but to engage in "true experience [*vrai expérience*], that experience which arises from the immediate contact [*contact immédiat*] of the mind with its object".[75] It is precisely this experience that Bergson sees as being ideally engendered by metaphysics via its method of intuition. Having explained its necessity for Bergson, let us then investigate this method more closely on its own terms.

1.2. The 'method' of intuition

We have seen Bergson argue that though human social life is characterised by its problematic inability to comprehend and grasp duration, this shunning of duration that sociality involves is by no means irreversible. Indeed, "reversing" our separation from duration is precisely the task that Bergson attributes to metaphysics and its method of intuition.[76] Before I proceed to outline the latter conception, however, let me first say a few words about Bergson's own distinctive brand of metaphysics, focusing in particular on how it is said to differ from more traditional conceptions thereof.[77]

Although the subject of metaphysics makes several appearances in Bergson's early writings, it is perhaps only from 1903, with the essay "Introduction to Metaphysics", that Bergson begins to explicitly clarify the stakes of his own contribution to that field.[78] As that text insists, the mistake that traditional metaphysics—much like science—has heretofore made is that of attempting to explain the mobility of reality via a process of symbolical

[74] Mullarkey, 1999: 158.
[75] MM 183.
[76] "*To philosophise means to reverse the normal direction of the workings of thought*." CM 106, 149.
[77] In both *Time and Free Will* (TFW xix, 174-175) and *Matter and Memory* (MM 66-68), metaphysics often appears—in conjunction with psychologism—as a target of Bergson's critical reflections. It is not until *Creative Evolution* (CE 191-192), and the 1910 "Introduction" to *Matter and Memory* (MM 15-16) that Bergson begins to consider his own project as a metaphysical enterprise that "disperses" the obscurities caused by habits formed in action.
[78] For an excellent introduction to this text, see: Lawlor, 2010: 24-41; CM 133-169.

"analysis" or representation.[79] For Bergson, these traditional enterprises have limited themselves to explaining reality through an immobile, conceptual "view" or "schema" of its flow.[80] A classic example of this is the attempt by Zeno of Elea to reduce real movement to the series of ideal points in space through which a mobile passes.[81] According to Bergson, this type of conceptual analysis—which works by "extracting" fixed representations from a mobile reality—leads traditional metaphysics to all kinds of "illusions".[82] The most pernicious of these is perhaps the idea that mobility can be explained via a process of aggregation or addition of immobiles.[83] Now, in a certain sense, these types of illusions are *well founded*, insofar as the natural inclination of our intelligence is indeed to seek stability and solidity where there is only becoming.[84] In this sense, Bergson writes, the attempts by traditional metaphysics and science to deploy symbolic and static categories are "perfectly natural".[85] But these attempts ignore that this natural tendency is valid *only* in the context of a certain type of *practical* activity. What traditional metaphysics and science fail to grasp is that the knowledge they develop, far from being the truth of reality, is only the "practical knowledge" that the intellect develops in order to turn a "profit" from material things.[86] Their knowledge is only the "superficial encrustment [*croutê*]" or "crystallisation" of a deeper, mobile reality.[87]

By contrast, the "true" metaphysics that Bergson sees himself as developing not only begins by recognising the practical orientation that underlies all symbolical knowledge, but also claims to "dispense" with it altogether.[88] For Bergson, a true metaphysics is not one that in any meaningful sense makes use of the static representations generated by the intellect: "it is *strictly itself* only when it goes beyond the concept, or at least when it frees itself of the

[79] CM 164.
[80] CM 152.
[81] CM 152; CE 308-313. Another prominent example, explored by Bergson in *Time and Free Will*, is the traditional, representative conception of intensive states: TFW 1-74.
[82] CM 144.
[83] CM 159-160.
[84] The notion of well founded illusions—here exemplified by Bergson's explanation of how the intellect leads to false metaphysical problems—is one that Deleuze himself repeatedly deploys in his own philosophy. See for instance: DR 250.
[85] CM 5.
[86] CM 150.
[87] CM 7, 137.
[88] CM 136.

inflexible and ready-made concepts and creates other very different from those we usually handle".[89] The type of knowledge that true metaphysics achieves is not, therefore, merely an immobile view or schema that the mind takes on reality with a view to practical activity. Indeed, insofar as true metaphysical knowledge does away with symbolical representation, it must be classified instead as a "disinterested knowledge [*connaissance désintéressée*]".[90] It is a type of knowledge that passes through no social or practical detour, and "by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it."[91] Hence, rather than solely focusing itself on superficial manifestations of reality "in the form of facts side by side with other facts (…) which can to a certain extent be measured, and which in fact open out in the direction of distinct multiplicity and spatiality", true metaphysics opens onto "a reciprocal penetration which is pure duration, refractory to law and measurement."[92] True metaphysics takes possession of a mobile reality as the latter develops itself in "depth", and it does so without the *mediation* of the conventional social prejudices that necessarily enter into the efforts of analysis and measurement.[93]

But if intellectual representation dominates our habitual interaction with the world, how is metaphysics able to "go beyond [*dépasser*]" this essentially human way of thinking?[94] For Bergson, we must begin to answer this question by noting that besides the intellect, human beings are also composed of "another faculty capable of another kind of knowledge."[95] This faculty is what Bergson calls the intuition. As *Creative Evolution* explains, the general evolution of life has not produced the intellect as the *exclusive* capacity of humanity for engaging the world. Because evolution proceeds by way of the division of a generalised temporal impulsion—the *élan vital*—into divergent *tendencies*—like the intellect and instinct—each those tendencies retains a "trace" of the original creative force whence it

[89] CM 141 (emphasis added).
[90] CM 150; CE 176.
[91] CM 135.
[92] CM 102.
[93] CM 2, 7, 102.
[94] CM 163, 46, 61.
[95] CM 62.

sprung, even as it continues to become increasingly differentiated from other tendencies.[96] Now, for Bergson, this means that around the intellect there is a "fringe of vague intuition that surrounds our distinct—that is, intellectual—representation."[97] There is a perceptual fringe in humanity, that is, that allows it to reconnect with the temporal force that created even the intellect itself.[98] This fringe, furthermore, is something that "exists in each one of us", but which has, by virtue of the fact that it serves no practical purpose, become "covered [*recouverte*] by functions more useful to life."[99] Nevertheless, because this fringe of intuition exists, and because it is also what directly links us to the temporality of life, it is *via* the intuition that a true metaphysics must seek to once again re-establish a contact with duration: "It is there, accordingly, that we must look for hints to expand the intellectual form of our thought; from there we shall derive the impetus necessary to lift us above [*au-dessus*] ourselves."[100]

Of what, then, does this intuition consist? In his second introduction to *The Creative Mind*, Bergson is keen to distinguish his own conception of intuition from that developed by German Idealists like Schelling and Schopenhauer, for whom the intuition is said to be "an immediate search for the eternal".[101] In contrast to this, Bergson offers the following definition of intuition:

> The intuition we refer to then bears above all upon internal duration. It grasps [*saisit*] a succession which is not juxtaposition, a growth from within, the uninterrupted prolongation of the past into a present which is already blending into the future. It is the direct vision [*vision directe*] of the mind by the mind—nothing intervening [*rien d'interposé*], no refraction through the prism, one of whose facets is space and another language. Instead of states contiguous to states, which become words in juxtaposition to words, we have here the indivisible and therefore substantial continuity

[96] CE 116-119.
[97] CE 49.
[98] The intuition, moreover, allows us to come to the conclusion that "pure intellect is a contraction, by condensation, of a more extensive power." CE 46.
[99] CM 33. Bergson's repeated definition of the intuition as a faculty that exists in "all of us" suggests that beyond its function as a *philosophical* method, the intuition is also what we might call a *living* method that human beings are capable—with an exceptional effort—of drawing upon in order to rekindle their connection with life's temporality. cf. CM 36, 46, 55, 136; CE 176-177; ME 23; TSMR 38.
[100] CE 49.
[101] CM 18.

> of the flow of the inner life. Intuition, then, signifies first of all consciousness, but immediate consciousness [*conscience immédiate*], a knowledge [*connaissance*] which is contact and even coincidence.[102]

The intuition, then, is a sort of vision or perspective that the human mind adopts on its own inner continuity and duration.[103] Moreover, this vision is *direct* or *immediate* in the precise sense that it is not interspersed or contaminated with either of the prejudices that normally distort our relation to time—space and language.[104] As such, and unlike the analysis and measurement that dominate traditional metaphysics and science, the intuition does not simply formulate a static view or schema of mobile reality.[105] The knowledge provided by the intuition is exactly mapped onto the mobility of the real.[106] Thus, by immediately coinciding with the flow of inner duration, the intuition places us in direct relation with precisely that fluidity that the intellect is only capable of reducing into symbols: "Intuition gives us the thing whose spatial transposition, whose metaphorical translation alone, is seized by the intellect."[107]

That is not to say that the intuition bears only upon *internal* duration. Indeed, for Bergson, the intuition possesses "multiple, complementary" senses.[108] And crucially, beyond providing a direct access into inner duration, one of the additional senses of intuition is that of a possible *sympathy* with other durations.[109] As Bergson rhetorically explains:

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[102] CM 20.
[103] In line with his view that the intuition has a variety of senses, Bergson elsewhere (CM 14) describes it as a "kind of *spiritual auscultation*" of duration. For the most part, however, vision remains Bergson's central metaphor for explicating the intuition: cf. Al-Saji, 2010: 148-173.
[104] Mullarkey (1999: 158) contends that the intuition should not be equated with immediacy because the vision it provides requires effort: "intuition is clearly distinguished from immediate knowledge, being described elsewhere as a search requiring a prodigious effort." However, this interpretation remains unconvincing. It not only flies in the face of Bergson's repeated description of the intuition as an *immediate* vision or knowledge of duration, but it also fails to recognise that when Bergson speaks of immediacy, this is meant not in opposition to *effort* but rather in the sense of *lacking mediation through the social*. In this latter sense, the intuition is *both* immediate and effortful. cf. CM 3-4; MM 187.
[105] CM 152.
[106] CM 29.
[107] CM 55.
[108] CM 22.
[109] For informative studies of Bergson's notion of intuition *qua* sympathy, see: Ansell-Pearson, 2018: 161-168; Lapoujade, 2004: 1-18; Lapoujade, 2018: 39-58.

> Does [intuition] not go even further? Is it merely the intuition of ourselves? Between our consciousness and other consciousnesses the separation is less clear-cut than between our body and other bodies, for it is space which makes these divisions sharp. (….) It may be that intuition opens the way for us into consciousness in general. But is it only with consciousness that we are in sympathy? If every living being is born, develops and dies, if life is an evolution and if duration is in this case a reality, is there not also an intuition of the vital, and consequently a metaphysics of life?[110]

Clearly indicated here is the idea that the intuition is not a practice with a merely *subjective* significance. Although the intuition perhaps *starts* with that "one reality which we all seize from within", it is also capable of acquiring a much wider object.[111] Indeed, as a form of sympathy, the intuition also enables us "to affirm the existence of object both inferior and superior to us, though nevertheless in a certain sense interior to us, to make them co-existent without difficulty".[112] Following Deleuze, we might say that the intuition is the movement "by which we make use of our own duration to affirm and immediately recognise the existence of other durations, above or below us."[113] This means that if through the intuition "time is immediately given", this time is no longer, for Bergson, simply that of the subject.[114] By pushing the intuition to its extremity, we not only begin to directly relate ourselves to other living durations, but we can even coincide with that temporal impulsion that is creative of all life in general, with that *élan vital* which is "reciprocal interpenetration, endlessly continued creation."[115] In this sense, the intuition moves us beyond our 'merely human'—or social—state precisely by *immediately opening* us up to a variety of other, fundamentally *inhuman*—or *asocial*—durations.[116]

But how is this intuition of a temporality beyond the social to be reached? As Bergson

[110] CM 20.
[111] CM 136.
[112] CM 155.
[113] B 33; cf. Ansell-Pearson, 2002: 64.
[114] CM 86.
[115] CM 156; CE 178.
[116] As Ansell-Pearson (2018: 168) puts the point: "In making the effort, then, to think 'beyond the human state' we come into contact, through intuition, with movements, memories, and non-human consciousnesses deep within us. Deep within the human there is something other than the human." cf. CM 163.

explains, to achieve the intuition his metaphysics directs itself to we must follow a strict series of methodological steps. In an initial step, we must seek to *separate* or *disengage* the mind from the space and language within which it is so usually at home.[117] From this position, we must then identify what "lines of fact" suggest themselves to consciousness *in isolation* from the social prejudices that normally contaminate it.[118] Only by studying these lines in their purity and following them all the way to their temporal origin, as it were, can we begin to "seek experience at its source, or rather above that decisive *turn* where, taking a bias in the direction of our utility, it becomes properly *human* experience."[119] And once this work is done, Bergson suggests, the lines of fact that were initially separated must again be reconnected in thought—as if by a process of "integration"—such that we can reconstitute the initial point of departure (that is, habitual human experience) from an altogether different perspective: the perspective of duration.[120] Thus, it is by focusing our attention on natural tendencies—as they have become *decoupled* from social mixtures through the intuition—that we can begin to establish a contact with a duration that is not simply human or social "and so recover contact with the real."[121] As Bergson insists, however, nothing in this process is easy. Because the intuition must follow each of these methodological steps in direct opposition to our most ingrained habits of thinking, it always requires a serious and prodigious *effort*.[122] This effort, moreover, is never simply accomplished in one stroke. To achieve the intuition of duration that Bergsonian metaphysics directs itself to, we must engage not in a *single*, isolated act but rather "in an indefinite *series* of acts, all doubtless of the same genus".[123] "For one does not obtain from reality an intuition, that is to say, a spiritual harmony with its innermost quality if one has not gained its confidence by a long comradeship with its

[117] CM 29.
[118] ME 4.
[119] MM 184. Deleuze (B 21-30) provides an influential reading of these passages in the first chapter of *Bergsonism*.
[120] MM 185; cf. B 28-29.
[121] MM 185.
[122] "I recommend a certain manner of thinking which courts difficulty; I value effort above everything." CM 69; MM 185.
[123] CM 155 (emphasis added).

superficial manifestations."[124]

For these reasons, the intuition is also not a mere "feeling" of duration.[125] Indeed, as Deleuze aptly puts it: "We might say, strangely enough, that duration would remain purely intuitive, in the ordinary sense of the word, if intuition—in the properly Bergsonian sense—were not there as method."[126] Said differently, because each intuitive act builds upon the instantiation of previous acts like it, there is what we might call a *methodological coherence* that is proper to the metaphysical intuition, which also distinguishes it from the more inchoate feelings of duration that are continually suggested to us in lived experience. As Bergson insists, metaphysical intuition is not unlike science in the sense that each of its instantiations relies on the "collection of observations and experiences gathered by (…) [the previous] reflection of the mind on the mind."[127] Now, to grasp how this operation is possible, we must recognise that the "intuition, like all thought, finally becomes lodged in concepts such as duration, [and] qualitative or heterogeneous multiplicity".[128] That is to say that if the insights acquired by the intuition are *immediate*—in the sense that they do not pass through the social detour of language—they do nonetheless display a tendency to *eventually become crystallised* into symbolical representations that are then capable of being retained and communicated by the intelligence.[129] Although these representations—insofar as they are 'merely' the linguistic crystallisations of a deeper reality—clearly cannot be counted as the immediate contact or vision of duration that the intuition seeks, they can nevertheless "suggest" useful reference points for future intuitive acts that *do* establish such immediacy.[130] In this way, although each morsel of knowledge that the intuition creates is *practically* useless, it nonetheless feeds into the further knowledge of duration that the intuition, as

[124] CM 169.
[125] CM 69-70.
[126] B 14.
[127] CM 169.
[128] CM 23.
[129] "Intuition will be communicated by the intelligence. It is more than idea; nevertheless in order to be transmitted, it will have to use ideas as a conveyance." We will see this notion of intuitions crystallizing into communicable representations is also central to *The Two Sources*. CM 29.
[130] CM 29, 30, 141, cf. 168-169.

method, will create.[131] Far from being a mere familiarisation with duration that dies and is reborn with each intuitive act, the intuition—as a method of knowledge acquisition—therefore draws upon a metaphysical order of knowledge that it itself has historically created. As Bergson himself puts it, there is a *progressive* character to the metaphysical intuition.[132] As a method, the intuition "consists in an interchange of impressions which, correcting and adding to each other, will end by expanding the humanity in us and making us even transcend it."[133]

Metaphysical intuition is further distinguished from mere feeling in the relations it entertains *with* science. As Bergson notes in the second introduction to *The Creative Mind*, his conception of metaphysics is not, despite appearances, strictly opposed to science.[134] For Bergson, both science and metaphysics hold equal value as attempts to describe reality: "They both bear upon reality itself."[135] But to retain that value, they must each stick to the side of reality (or of the "absolute") that is "proper" to it: for metaphysics, this is the domain of spirit, for science, that of inert matter.[136] Now, as Bergson explains, because there is no difference in value between these two enterprises, and because they each take one of the two sides of the absolute as their object, science and metaphysics are also capable of entering into a *mutually productive relation*:

> as mind and matter touch one another, metaphysics and science, all along their common surface, will be able to test one another [*s'éprouver l'une a l'autre*], until contact becomes fecundation [*fécondation*]. The results obtained on either side will of necessity be linked, because matter links up with mind. If the insertion is not perfect, it will be because there is something to rectify in our science, or in our metaphysics, or in both. Metaphysics will thus, by its peripheral part, exert a

[131] As Barry Allen (2013: 52) suggests, although "intuitive knowledge is useless in the sense of not advancing an already-given goal, it remains practical in ramifications for other values. The knowledge holds no material advantage but it can alter what else you value." Going slightly beyond Allen's claim here, we might say that by means of language, the knowledge acquired by the intuition also sets the value or direction for what other morsels of knowledge the intuition will seek.
[132] CM 50; ME 4.
[133] CE 191-192.
[134] Bergson is critical only of that science which "speculates upon things as *a whole*" and which forgets that its proper domain is that of inert matter. CM 26 (emphasis added).
[135] CM 25.
[136] CM 30.

> salutary influence upon science. Conversely, science will communicate to metaphysics habits of precision which will spread through it from the periphery to the centre. (….) That is to say that science and metaphysics will differ in object and method, but will commune in experience.[137]

In its communication with science, metaphysics thus receives a form of *rigour* and *precision*. The knowledge of duration acquired by the intuition—which might otherwise remain vague and inchoate, like feeling—not only finds itself 'tested' and 'corrected' by science, but also receives its "verification" from its material counterpart.[138] We might say, through its fecund relation with science metaphysics receives its *highest* methodological expression: with science, the intuition is made to precisely and immediately coincide with its durational object whilst leaving aside any of the symbolical impediments that might otherwise interpose themselves between the two.[139] In its relation with science, the intuition finally rises to the level of an immediate *knowledge* of duration.[140]

When this process is finally achieved, when the intuition turns into the direct and immediate vision of duration that Bergson proposes, the knowledge of duration that it produces also comes to hold *more* than a merely epistemic value. Indeed, according to Bergson, when the intuition is finally reached, it can also become one of the means by which we enrich the domains of our lives: "Everyday life can be nourished and illuminated by it."[141] By engaging in intuition we begin to expose ourselves to not only the difference and alterity of a number of other durations, but also to the temporal impulse that is creative of all life in general—the *élan vital*; in both cases, we begin to finally open ourselves to the temporality of the new. Furthermore, in immediately coinciding with this creative power through intuition, we also are *carried along* by its novelty: "What was immobile and frozen in our perception is warmed and set in motion. Everything comes to life [*s'anime*] around us, everything is revivified in us [*se revivifie en nous*]. A great impulse carries beings and things along. We

[137] CM 31.
[138] CM 31.
[139] CM 17.
[140] As Deleuze argues in *Bergsonism*, without "the methodical thread of intuition" notions such as duration would "remain indeterminate from the point of view of knowledge." B 14.
[141] CM 106.

feel ourselves uplifted, carried away, borne along by it [*soulevés*, *entraînés, portés*]."[142] Slightly twisting one of Bergson's formulations, we might say that in this particular sense the intuition becomes a veritable work of "differentiation": that in establishing this immediate contact or vision of duration, the intuition also actively introduces temporal *difference* and *novelty* into our lives.[143] "Hence", as John Mullarkey has aptly put it, "intuition can act as a resource, the excavation of which can lead to new inventions, art forms, theories and emotions."[144] The intuition can become a means, that is, by which we *overcome* ourselves by introducing temporal mobility into our otherwise static modes of living.[145] In a further sense, and insofar as life itself is composed and created by durational heterogeneity, we might also say that for Bergson the effort of intuition is a kind of "preparation for the art of living."[146] With the exception that this living will longer be constitutively determined by our 'merely' social or practical impulses. It will be a form of living that derives its "strength" and "vitality" not from social or historical prejudice and convention, but from its immediate and intuitive participation "in the great work of creation which is the origin of all things and which goes on before our eyes."[147] It will be the living of "a mind which reinserts itself into the vital impetus, the generator of societies which in turn are the generator of ideas."[148]

1.3. The ethics and history of intuitive knowledge

Having outlined Bergson's conception of the intuition as the method by which humanity can immediately reunite itself with the temporal force of duration, we are now in a better position to more closely assess the *ethical* implications of this conception. As I began to strongly hint towards the end of the last section, although Bergson does not quite use that

[142] CM 131-132.
[143] "Let us say, then, (…) that *one of the objects of metaphysics is to operate differentiations and qualitative integrations*." CM 161-162.
[144] Mullarkey, 1999: 160.
[145] For a comprehensive reading of intuitive knowledge as a form of self-overcoming, see: Kebede, 2019: 11-50.
[146] CM 86.
[147] CM 86.
[148] CM 46.

terminology in his metaphysical writings, there is clearly an ethical dimension to his claims that the intuition forms a method for opening onto the vitality of duration. If ethics is defined—as we defined it in the introduction to this thesis—as an openness and receptivity to difference, becoming, or alterity, then there is clearly something ethical in a practice that attempts to establish an immediate contact or direct vision of duration. Whether that intuition directs itself to those 'inferior' and 'superior' durations that Bergson speaks of, or, indeed, whether it takes aim at the great durational 'impulse' that carries all life along, it is clear that Bergsonian metaphysics positions itself as engendering an ethical exposure to the temporal novelty and creativity that is duration itself.[149]

This ethical impulse that lies at the heart of Bergson's conception of metaphysics has not gone unnoticed by many of his significant interlocutors. In an early essay entitled "Bergson's Conception of Difference", Deleuze, for example, writes that Bergson makes an "inestimable contribution" to philosophy with his method of intuition.[150] Because this method is, for Deleuze, "a method that *seeks* difference", Bergson's thought distinguishes itself from that of his predecessors by introducing into philosophy the chance for a valorization of difference that goes "up to the absolute."[151] In effect, Bergson's method presents us with a chance to return to things themselves and to encounter them "in person"—that is, in their *internal* difference—without representing or reducing them to something external that they are *not*.[152] In this sense, there is an ethical promise at the heart of Bergson's philosophy insofar as ethics is, for Deleuze, precisely the movement by which thought is made to encounter a form of difference that is not covered over or mediated by any of the categories of identity and common sense.[153]

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[149] In this sense, we might say, with Mullarkey (1999: 158), that Bergson's philosophy of intuition provides "an ethics of alterity fleshed out in empirical concerns."
[150] Deleuze, 2004a: 32.
[151] Deleuze, 2004a: 26 (emphasis added); Deleuze, 2004b: 32.
[152] Deleuze, 2004a: 23; Deleuze, 2004b: 32, 51.
[153] That said, Deleuze's early commentaries on Bergson remain relatively reserved on the question of ethics in Bergson. The topic finds an explicit exposition only in the last few pages of *Bergsonism* (B 106-112). In *Difference and Repetition*, as we will see in chapter five, Deleuze also briefly ponders what ethical value might be held by Bergson's conception of memory, before decisively turning to Nietzsche's conception of eternal return as a more promising ethical avenue. cf. DR 84-85, 88.

Similarly, Levinas, who defines ethics as "the Same taking the irreducible Other into account", insists that Bergson's contribution to philosophy cannot be underestimated.[154] In his essay "The Old and the New", Levinas asserts:

> It is important to underline the importance of Bergsonism for the entire problematic of contemporary philosophy; it is an essential stage of the movement which puts into question the ontological confines of spirituality. [Philosophy] no longer returns to the assimilating act of consciousness, to the reduction of all novelty—of all alterity—to what in one way or another thought already supported, to the reduction of every other [*Autre*] to the Same. (….) Priority is given to the relations traditional philosophy always treated as secondary and subordinate. (….) In this reversal—the priority of duration over permanence—there is access to novelty, an access independent of the ontology of the Same.[155]

Like Deleuze, Levinas also identifies a concrete ethical promise in Bergson's writings. Specifically, Levinas sees Bergson's emphasis on the intuition—here understood as "the autonomous upsurge of an unceasing novelty before its reduction to like instants"—as at least providing some "valuable suggestions and encouragements" for the task of conceiving a truly ethical relation where the novelty and alterity of the Other is no longer reduced to the categories of the Same.[156]

But if both Deleuze and Levinas locate an ethical promise in Bergson's writings, there is also, following Levinas, perhaps some reason to question the extent to which the intuition in fact *realises* that promise. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, alongside his praise of Bergson, Levinas also piercingly wonders whether the intuition in fact constitutes the modality "within which the alterity of the *new* would explode, immaculate and untouchable as alterity of absolute newness."[157] More accurately, Levinas asks whether there is not a sort of "aging of the new" involved in Bergson's emphasis on the intuition; he asks whether this Bergsonian opening does not, by the very act of welcoming or opening

[154] TI 47 (translation modified).
[155] ON 132.
[156] ON 130, 122.
[157] ON 133.

onto alterity, also *strip* it of its novelty.[158] In short, Levinas' concern is that there is something about Bergson's intuition that prevents it from establishing an *immediate* relation with novelty where that novelty is not contained or contaminated by the dominance of the Same. This potential problem that Levinas identifies with Bergson is not simply, however—and as Mullarkey argues—that "Bergson's philosophy of life is still too ontological for Levinas, too creative and active."[159] Levinas clarifies in another short essay published soon after "The Old and the New" that his worry relates more precisely to the question of *knowledge* and the extent to which the intuition is capable of proceeding "otherwise than according to knowledge," that is, otherwise than according to a modality that reduces all temporal alterity to the Same and thereby divests it of its strangeness.[160] Once again, Levinas bitingly asks: "Does Bergson go that far? Does he not introduce *knowledge* behind duration? Does he not speak, in expressing the 'intuition of duration' of a duration which is experienced rather than of a duration substituting itself for the act of experience? That is possible."[161] Once again, the concern is that *as an enterprise of knowledge acquisition*, the intuition risks or "compromises the novelty of the new" and allows that novelty to express itself only as a rearrangement of the *old*. [162]

Now, although, as we saw in the last section, Bergson at several points equates the intuition with knowledge, it is important for our purposes in this chapter that in the two texts I have just mentioned Levinas stops short of developing a sustained critique of Bergson on these points. Levinas' objections to Bergson—if they are indeed objections—appear only in the form of rhetorical questions that hardly amount to a robust conclusion.[163] Bearing in mind

[158] ON 133.
[159] Mullarkey, 1999: 110.
[160] As a commentary on Bergson, "The Old and the New" should be read in conjunction with the later "Transcendence and Intelligibility", which repeats—in some cases *verbatim*—Levinas' earlier praise of Bergson, whilst more explicitly clarifying that the problem with intuition relates to *knowledge*. See Levinas, 1996a: 149-159, esp. 155-156; cf. ON 133-134.
[161] Levinas, 1996a: 155. (Emphasis added). On the late Levinas' critique of knowledge, see also: Levinas, 1998a: 97-105.
[162] ON 134. The title of Levinas' "The Old and the New" seems to play on an assertion in *The Creative Mind* that language and common thought "express the new only as a rearrangement of the old." cf. CM 62-65.
[163] Lawlor, 2005: 176. That said, given that in the two texts we just have cited Levinas moves beyond

that in both these texts Levinas is attempting to remind his audience of the value of a philosophy that has been too readily confined to the dustbins of history, this reticence to embark on an extended critique of Bergson is not unsurprising.[164] Unfortunately, this reticence is not helped by the fact that in both texts, Levinas also insists that Bergsonism brings an "inestimable message" against the all-encompassing tendency within Western philosophy to "equalise" alterity by knowledge.[165] Levinas never explicitly clarifies why Bergson's philosophy, despite its avowed and repeated definition of intuition as a form of knowledge of duration, is capable of making this contribution. For these reasons, though Levinas' texts certainly point the way towards a series of potential problems with Bergson's ethical conception of intuition, their equivocation can only take us so far in establishing why the intuition is not quite the immediate opening onto durational novelty that Bergson envisages. Hence, for the task that occupies us in this chapter, which is that of articulating the ethical feasibility of Bergson's conception of metaphysical intuition, we are perhaps better served by also looking beyond the confines of Levinas' merely suggestive texts.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, another, more comprehensive critique of Bergson's conception of intuitive knowledge has been developed by Max Horkheimer.[166] Inspired by Walter Benjamin's claim that Bergson's is a "deathless" philosophy that remains "estranged from history", Horkheimer's central contention is that Bergson's conception of intuition remains unhelpfully oblivious of its own historical preconditions.[167] This is not to suggest that there is nothing commendable in Bergson's philosophy.[168] Indeed, according to

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Bergson to focus on the Descartes' notion of infinity, it is clear that for him Bergson at best plays only a mediate or suggestive role in the effort to conceptualise a true opening to alterity. cf. ON 133-138; Levinas, 1996a: 155-159.

[164] Levinas, 1996a: 154; cf. Levinas and Kearney, 1986: 13-14.

[165] ON 129; Levinas, 1999: 154-155.

[166] This critique forms part of Horkheimer's wider challenge to *Lebensphilosophie*, which he broadly regards as encouraging political passivity and a resignation to the irrationality of prevailing oppressive social structures. For brief introductions to Horkheimer's motivations in writing this piece, see: Jay, 1973 48-54; Jones, 2007: 23; Soulez, 1983: 3-8.

[167] Though seemingly strange, Benjamin's (1999: 157-161, 180, 185) claim that Bergson's is a "deathless" philosophy does find some textual support in *Creative Evolution*, where Bergson claims that intuition will enable us to "clear the most formidable objects, perhaps even death." CE 271; see also Blencowe, 2008: 139-158.

Levinas also refers to Bergson's philosophy as "deathless". TO 80.

[168] Like Benjamin, Horkheimer claims that "Bergson's whole work towers above most philosophical

Horkheimer, Bergson is to be praised in particular for his foundational theme of "real time, [which] is a central category of any thinking of history," and for his deeply insightful analysis of how the intelligence comes to unconsciously adopt certain categories as given.[169] As he puts it: "Bergson's work is rich in contributions for uncovering conventional mentality in its emergence and thus for comprehending and sublating the reified pictures of thought in their dependence on human praxis."[170] In other words, by insisting that our habitual patterns of thought find their proper foundation in practical or living activity, Bergson helpfully clarifies why the representations that govern the intelligence have come to hold such importance for us in society. By showing that those representations always find their condition in the concrete ways that society re-produces its living through practical or labouring activity, Bergson "has x-rayed one of the most important factors which mediate the dependency of ideas on social praxis."[171] He has revealed that the intellectual categories that normally dominate our interaction with the world always find their proper condition in a *historically determined field of actuality*.[172] In so doing, Bergson has also *in part* cleared the way for a type of philosophy that does not simply *reify* certain forms of social organisation through its unreflective deployment or "absolutisation of categories".[173] He has *partly* cleared the way towards a philosophy that is self-conscious with regards to the social constitution of its *own* knowledge, that is, "conscious of the process of the labour of social knowledge."[174]

But crucially, for Horkheimer, "Bergson only goes half way."[175] Despite providing these invaluable insights with regard to *intellectual* representation, Bergson also fails to submit his

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phenomena of the present" and that his own work "owes decisive elements" to Bergson. BMT 10.
[169] BMT 10.
[170] BMT 11.
[171] BMT 13.
[172] Horkheimer reveals that the notion of "history" he deploys in his critique of Bergson involves not only states of affairs that have become *realised* (in Bergson's sense of realisation) or "congealed" as the products of a generalised movement of becoming, but also those "historical forces and tendencies" that, despite not being fully realised or congealed, nonetheless *act* as *real* forces constituting the social world. BMT 11.
[173] BMT 13.
[174] BMT 13, 16.
[175] BMT 13.

own notion of intuitive knowledge to the same level of scrutiny.[176] Horkheimer writes: "the inclusion of knowledge in the historical context breaks off immediately for Bergson when it is no longer science that is being discussed, but metaphysics. He has not recognised that this is also dependent on historical conditions and exerts social functions."[177] The issue that emerges is that when Bergson begins to speak of intuitive knowledge as a direct and immediate contact with duration, he seems to forget that this knowledge *too* finds its condition of possibility in historically determined social arrangements.[178] In so doing, Bergson's philosophy establishes a "myth" that there is an "outside of history (…), which is supposed to elude the concepts of humans and only be open to metaphysical immersion."[179] But for Horkheimer, this myth could not be further from the truth, since both the content and function of thought—whether that thought is intuitive or not—are always *mediated* through history, just as they also depend on the concrete position that the thinking subject occupies in a given society.[180] Yet, by ignoring this basic insight that *all* processes—including the process by which consciousness intuits itself and the world—always occur in the context of a historically determined social development, Bergson's conception of metaphysics shows itself as both "antiquated" and underdeveloped.[181] As Horkheimer bluntly puts it: "In relation to his own absolutization of an isolated moment of knowledge, [Bergson] remains naïve."[182]

On Horkheimer's reading, this naivety in relation to history creates two central problems for Bergson. First, it prevents Bergson from "positing his concrete researches in a fruitful theoretical context."[183] Indeed, while Bergson could have used his method of intuition to

[176] Theodore Adorno (2013: 45-47) elsewhere repeats elements of this critique of Bergson.
[177] BMT 11-12.
[178] Echoing Horkheimer's point here, Adorno (2013: 45-46) writes: "What Bergson calls intuition cannot be denied in such experience, but neither can it be hypostatized. The intuitions which intertwine with concepts (….) do not constitute an absolute source of knowledge, cut off from discursive thought by an ontological abyss. (….) [T]hey break open the closed structure of deductive procedures. But this does not mean they have tumbled from heaven."
[179] BMT 13.
[180] BMT 17.
[181] Even Hegel, Horkheimer argues, understood that "all events, right down to their 'spiritual' bifurcation, have been co-determined in a preceding history. (….) [But] Bergson fails to connect up with this philosophical development, and therefore remains on a level overtaken by it." BMT 12, 16.
[182] BMT 12; cf. Adorno, 2013: 45.
[183] BMT 13.

develop “a more differentiated knowledge of the historical context” preventing humanity from establishing a true contact with duration, because he fails to reflect on the necessary historicity of intuitive knowledge, he in fact fails to do so.[184] Second, and perhaps more importantly, in refusing this historicity to intuitive knowledge, Bergson also fails to recognise that the intuition—insofar as it remains socially mediated—can itself tend towards the *reification* or *replication* of certain states of affairs.[185] In other words, because the intuition is never simply an immediate and direct relation to duration, but rather a relation that is always mediated historically, the knowledge that it produces not only varies in relation to the social situations that make it possible, but also carries within it traces of those same situations—it also carries with it traces of the ‘old’, to once again invoke Levinas.[186] Now, as Horkheimer explains, without recognising this necessary historical mediation, the illusion that we risk falling into is that of elevating a contingent and socially defined product of knowledge to one that is *true irrespective of social context*: “What Bergson calls intuition and sympathy plays just as much a role in thought as establishing and ordering. Nevertheless, as soon as these moments do not reflect themselves in their real function, changing according to the social situation, and instead are split up into a single and absolute method, their results become just so many phantasms and ideologies.”[187] To avoid these problems, Horkheimer further argues, Bergson would have to recognise the necessary connection between intuitive

[184] The complaint that Bergson fails to ascribe a historical specificity to his method of intuition is not unique to Horkheimer. Similar concerns can be found in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean Hyppolite, with Merleau-Ponty (1964: 187-191, cf. 1970: 26-27) writing that “Bergson did not think about history from within as he had thought about life from within.” Hyppolite (2003: 114), for his part, writes that “Bergson has not developed this theme [of historical duration], and has not explicitly studied historical duration—human duration in general.” A.D. Lindsay (1911: 239), in his influential study of Bergson, makes a related, if almost inverse, point: “Bergson has unfortunately paid no attention to the nature of historical inquiry, but it admirably illustrates his account of intuition.”

[185] BMT 11-12.

[186] Leon ter Schure (2019: 113) briefly attempts to defend Bergson against Horkheimer’s criticisms by arguing that *pace* the latter, “Bergson’s metaphysics does not imply an adherence to eternal metaphysical truths.” This response, however, addresses only one aspect of Horkheimer’s critique, and it fails to robustly contend with the latter’s assertion that if the intuition is *historically mediated*, then it also cannot (on Bergson’s own definition of immediacy) function as the *immediate* contact with duration that Bergson envisions.

[187] BMT 17-18. Once again, Adorno (2013: 47) further clarifies the stakes here: “By passing intuitions off as the immediate voice of that life which nevertheless continues to live only as mediated, he diluted them to an abstract principle that quickly allies itself with the abstract world against which it had been devised.”

thought and history, for only through that recognition can we find a way to *sublate* or *overcome* the tendency towards replication that is inherent to all intuitive knowledge *qua* historical. "Not the thought which prescinds from history, but the thought conscious of its connection with history (…) is able to manage that knowledge which 'establishes itself in the movement and adopts the very life of things.'"[188] Yet, it is just this that Bergson refuses to do by classifying the intuition as a direct and immediate contact with duration. And for Horkheimer, it is here, in this incapacity to tackle its own tendency towards reification or replication, that the second major problem with Bergson's conception of intuitive knowledge lies.

Now, insofar as Bergson *himself* saw something valuable in it, Horkheimer's critique clearly deserves careful consideration. In a letter to Charles Bouglé written in 1935, Bergson thanks Horkheimer for his "fine" study, praising it especially for showing "a serious fathoming of my works and at the same time a very penetrating philosophical sense."[189] That said, in this brief response to Horkheimer, Bergson also expresses some serious reservations about his objections, particularly as they relate to the method of intuition: those "objections do not take sufficient account of the method that I have tried to introduce into metaphysics and which consists of (1) dividing [*découper*] problems according to their natural lines; and (2) studying each problem *as if it was isolated*, with the idea that (…) the solutions will be joined together again."[190] In effect, Bergson's rejoinder to Horkheimer is that the latter has not sufficiently understood the *methodological* dimensions of intuition. He treats the intuition as a rapturous immersion in the absolute, whilst failing to heed the repeated warnings that the intuition is actually an effort that proceeds through a series of clearly defined methodological steps. And perhaps there is something to this Bergsonian retort: in his critique, Horkheimer

[188] BMT 18; CM 162.
[189] Bergson, 2002: 1491-1492. It is possible that this is only a 'polite' response on Bergson's part. This praise does nonetheless demand that more attention be given to Horkheimer's critique than some Bergson scholars—like Lundy (2013: 20), for example, who quickly dismisses it—have hitherto given it.
[190] Bergson, 2002: 1491-1492 (emphasis added).

explicitly refers to the intuition as a method only once, and then only in passing.[191] This entails that if Horkheimer's critique is to serve us in articulating the problems with Bergsonian intuition, we must also go further than he does. We must also show that, *defined as a method*, the intuition is at least susceptible to the historicisation that Horkheimer so strongly insists upon. For only in this way can our critical reading of Bergson do justice to the definition he provides for the intuition rather than simply speaking past it.

In this context, we must begin by recalling that when Bergson defines the intuition as a method, he distinguishes it from mere feeling by stipulating two basic conditions for it: first, that the intuition is a series of efforts that possess a certain methodological coherence, and second, that the intuition also entertains a set of productive or fecund relations with science. On the first of these points, as we saw in the last section, Bergson claims that what enables each effortful moment of intuition to coherently relate itself to all others is the fact that the knowledge produced by intuition eventually gathers itself into language. As Bergson writes: "Whether it be intellection or intuition, thought, of course, always utilises [*utilise sans doute toujours*] language" as a means for its expression, and it is this utilisation of language that enables each moment of the method to suggestively relate itself to the others.[192] Now, clearly Bergson does not see anything amiss in this reliance on or utilisation of language by the intuition. That is so because if each instance of intuition relies upon language—if "concepts are indispensable to it" as a means of expression—the intuition is still held to be prior to, and therefore independent of, its conceptual expression: "it is strictly itself only when it goes beyond the concept".[193] Even if the method of intuition relies upon a language that has an inherently social function, *in itself*, it is also irreducible to the 'merely' social significations that language necessarily carries: "it would be a strange mistake to take for a constitutive element of doctrine what was only the means of expressing it."[194]

Yet, on exactly this point, Horkheimer's qualms begin to once again reassert themselves.

[191] BMT 18.
[192] CM 23; cf. CM 139.
[193] CM 141.
[194] CM 91.

For if, as Bergson insists, the method of intuition always relies upon and utilises language, how can it also *shelter* or *immunise* itself from the sociality that he otherwise so strongly equates with the latter? Beyond a repeated reassertion that the intuition is an immediate and direct contact with the real, this is precisely what Bergson's methodological reflections fail to explain. Perhaps, one might attempt to provide this explanation by claiming that when Bergson speaks of intuition utilising language, this language is not the *static* language of the intellect, but rather a fluid, flexible or mobile language that has already become informed by intuition.[195] But crucially, this answer will still fail to clarify why a mobile language is any less *social* than a static one—something that becomes especially important when we consider that in *Creative Evolution* Bergson himself defines human language as both "mobile" *and* social.[196] On this score, then, Bergson cannot have it both ways: either there is no utilisation of language in the method of intuition, or else that utilisation is precisely what *contaminates* the method with the domain of sociality that Bergson is so keen to isolate from metaphysics. Now, since Bergson himself repeatedly insists on this utilisation as a feature of the method, on this point we are led to agree with Horkheimer that this method cannot but be affected by "historical powers, which actually 'move' the meaning and content of [its] thoughts".[197] Because each instance of that intuitive method relies on the 'suggestions' that are communicated to it by the linguistic crystallisations of previous intuitive instances, and because those crystallisations are—on Bergson's own definition of linguistic—*also* social, the intuition can never simply shelter itself from the social and historical significations that are necessarily implied by the latter. As a method that utilises language, the intuition always undergoes a process of social or historical *mediation* that in turn becomes constitutive of its fundamental sense—even if this constitutive process of mediation is precisely what Bergson is unwilling to recognise in his methodological writings.

Horkheimer's concerns also rear their head when we consider the relation Bergson

[195] cf. CM 141. This is part of ter Schure's (2019: 115-116) response to Horkheimer's critique.
[196] "But what characterises the signs of human language is not so much their generality as their mobility (....) *the intelligent sign is* mobile." CE 174.
[197] BMT 13.

posits between metaphysics and science. As we saw above, for Bergson, the intuition not only exerts a salutary influence upon science, but also receives from the latter verifications and habits of precision that spread from the periphery to its centre. As I phrased it above, it is this through this fecund interaction with science that the intuition receives its highest expression as a method for precisely knowing duration. Now, if we focus on these points, we are once again faced with a similar question: if the method of intuition receives verification and habits of precision from science, how does it also immunise itself against the influence of the social and practical domain that Bergson elsewhere so strongly equates with science? Given the reciprocal relation of fecundity between science and metaphysics, what is it that prevents the latter from, for example, operating according to the 'natural lines' or 'divisions' that are established and suggested to it by other scientific systems?[198] Once again, it seems that it is only by asserting the purity of intuition against the social that Bergson is capable of *at once* holding that "metaphysics cannot get along without the other sciences" *and* that the intuition is in any case shielded from the sociality those sciences imply.[199] But it is precisely this purity that cannot be maintained if Bergson is also intent on holding that metaphysics is verified and receives habits of precision from the sciences. If the intuition receives those habits and verification from science—if it receives them, moreover, not only at its periphery but also at its *centre*—then at its very heart the intuition is "also determined", as we have already seen Horkheimer write, "by social and individual impulses and interests."[200] The divisions and integrations that the intuition performs, far from following the 'natural lines' of the real in their isolation from all social prejudice, are *themselves* socially determined. Indeed, far from being the unconditioned effort that Bergson proposes, to the extent that it remains an epistemic method that productively interacts with science, the intuition receives at least part of its constitutive sense from those practical, historical and social impulses and

[198] According to Renaud Barbaras (2010: 271, cf. 259), there is indeed a sense in which Bergson's intuitive philosophy operates under the distinctions of other conceptual systems: "Bergson does not approach life on its own terms but instead approaches it solely from the viewpoint of the [Cartesian] metaphysical distinction between mind and matter."
[199] CM 141.
[200] BMT 16.

forces that also shape and constitute its scientific counterpart.[201]

But if by considering these two features of the intuitive method we find additional confirmation for Horkheimer's objections to Bergson, where does this leave the latter's central claim that the intuition provides a direct and immediate knowledge of duration? In effect, given that the intuition is a coherent epistemic method that is held together by its relation to both language and science, on each occasion, the knowledge that it produces is never simply the purely "disinterested knowledge" that Bergson holds.[202] Indeed, because the intuition finds its "methodological thread" in the relations it entertains with both science and language, the knowledge that it creates is also, to once again quote Horkheimer, "dependent on historical conditions and exerts social function."[203] The knowledge of duration provided by the intuition also has a domain of *actuality* as its point of support.[204] It thus not only finds part of its sense in a determined social and historical situation, but also necessarily emerges as a contingent expression or reflection of that same situation. In this way, we cannot assert, as Bergson repeatedly does, that intuitive knowledge is an unrefracted or unmediated contact whose fundamental sense is entirely "freed from those conditions of time and place" that determine scientific knowledge or living perception more generally.[205] Indeed, because intuitive knowledge always finds itself essentially related to a determined social field, the contact that it establishes with duration is never purely immediate; it never manages to entirely isolate itself from what Bergson dismisses as the habits necessary for everyday living.[206] Instead, the intuition is a contact with duration that always carries within itself traces of the actual domain wherein it arises, and is thus always

[201] As Barbaras (2006: 54) writes by way of comparison between Bergson and Merleau-Ponty: "Henceforth, we cannot, in principle, circumscribe a field of being short of the decisive turn and separate the order of intuition from that of action, because the turn has always already been made, because experience is originarily production, so that the prehumen or the pretheoretical is not something with which one can coincide."
[202] CM 150; CE 176.
[203] B 14; BMT 11-12.
[204] Reversing the sense of one of Bergson's formulations in *Matter and Memory*, we might say that the "actuality [*actualité*] of our [intuitive] perception thus lies in its activity" or in its relation to a social and historical domain. cf. MM 68-69.
[205] CM 90.
[206] CM 17; MM 184-185.

mediated, interposed and constituted by exactly that sociality that Bergson is so keen to isolate from 'true' metaphysics.

This also entails that if the intuition is defined as a work of 'differentiation', that is, as an effort that actively introduces difference and novelty into our lives by establishing a contact with the mobility of duration, then that differentiation *too* cannot be *purely* or *exclusively* animated by the "great impulse" that carries all life along, as Bergson says.[207] Indeed, on this point, Bergson is correct to note that in the same way that a gust of wind carries with it "dust taking a particular form", so too, the movement or impulse that is established by an intuitive contact with duration always carries with it static elements that "it has collected along its way".[208] But what we must recognise here, *pace* Bergson, is that if the intuition is mediated historically due to its relations to language and science, then the static elements that it encounters along the way are not merely dispensable or irrelevant aspects its movement. It is not the case, to continue Bergson's metaphor, "that other bits of dust might have as well been raised and that it would still have been the same whirlwind."[209] Indeed, if the intuition interacts with language and science in the way that Bergson describes, then the movement and difference that it creates also finds itself *affected* by the social debris that it encounters along the way; that debris becomes a *constitutive* feature of the movement itself.[210] As such, the movement that is engendered by the intuition is never a coincidence with a *pure* durational novelty—if we follow Bergson in understanding that novelty as the *unmixed* and "moving originality of things [*la mouvant originalité des choses*]."[211] We might say, once again invoking Levinas, that if the intuition is socially situated, then the movement it engenders is indeed less an "immaculate and untouchable" novelty than a novelty that always carries within itself traces of the "old", or which gives itself to the intuitive subject only

[207] CM 131-132.
[208] This metaphor appears in Bergson's 1911 lecture on "Philosophical Intuition" to suggest that a given philosopher's intuition constitutively depends on *neither* the thought of "his day", *nor* on the language that he uses to express that intuition. CM 90-92.
[209] CM 91-92.
[210] CM 91-92.
[211] CM 86.

by also retaining aspects of the social and historical domain that it necessarily traverses.[212]

In this way, if, as Bergson argues, the intuition can ethically enrich our lives by introducing into them temporal novelty and difference, then it does so not purely in function of the *immediate* contact it establishes with the temporal principle of life itself, but also in function of its own *constitutive immersion* or *implication* in a given social and historical field. In the knowledge of duration that it produces, the intuition always retains traces of the historical field of actuality from which it attempts precisely to divest or isolate itself. This historical implication entails that as an ethical method for knowing or aligning human beings with the novelty of duration, the intuition can itself also *reify* or *replicate* some of the ideological tendencies and phantasms that form part of its surrounding domains of actuality. That is to say that insofar as it remains dependent on historical conditions, the intuition itself exerts social functions that are not ultimately or neatly separable from that social and historical field that Bergson so strongly considers to be a barrier to an enlivening or ethical contact with time. Far from necessarily relating us to a temporal depth *without* the mediation of social prejudices, the intuition, insofar as it remains implicated with history, can even be said to function as one of the very means *by which* those prejudices are continued and extended. Yet, it is just this that Bergson refuses to acknowledge by repeatedly casting the intuition as an immediate contact or vision of duration. And it is here that history becomes a *problem to be resolved* in Bergson's temporal ethics. If the intuition can replicate those social or historical prejudices that Bergson so strongly equates with our habitual separation from duration, then the intuition's implication with history becomes a problem that a temporal ethics seeking to relate itself to the temporality of the new must seek to resolve. Once again, however, it is precisely this problem that Bergson's metaphysical writings neither can nor are willing to recognise and resolve with their repeated insistence that the intuition functions wholly outside or beyond our given social and historical fields of actuality.

[212] ON 133.

1.4. Conclusion: the problem of history

I have argued in this chapter that the ethical method of intuition cannot, *pace* Bergson's own claims, operate as an unmediated or immediate opening onto duration. Because at its constitutive level that method always entertains relations with science and language, it cannot entirely immunise itself from the historical impulses that permeate those two social formations. Concretely, this means that the intuition, and the knowledge of duration it produces, will always carry within itself traces of its surrounding social and historical world. Indeed, far from necessarily opening onto the novelty of duration, insofar as it remains implicated with history, the intuition can itself tend towards the reification or replication of contingent, social and historical states of affairs.

Now, given that Bergson himself strongly considers social and historical impulses as impediments to a true or immediate contact with the novelty of duration, this implication between the intuition and the historical, I have also argued, clearly emerges in his metaphysical writing as *a problem to be resolved*. If society and its history are what normally separate us from duration, and if the intuition is *itself* contaminated by history and society, then evidently we need to find a means of *dissociating* that ethical method—or, indeed, temporal ethics itself—from those aspects of our lives that usually or habitually separate us from temporal novelty. For only through such dissociation, it would seem, could we truly maintain the chance of ethically relating ourselves to the new.

As I indicated in the introduction to this thesis, a resolution to this problem, which is indeed a problem *of* history, can, broadly speaking, take one of two forms. We *either* find an ethical modality for relating ourselves to time that is *not* implicated with history—as Bergson's metaphysical intuition *is*—and we accept that perhaps Bergson has not quite gone far enough in separating his own temporal ethics from history. *Or*, we accept that our ethical modality for reconnecting with the novelty of time will *always* remain constitutively implicated with history and, in recognition of this fact, also devise a *strategic practice* for negotiating the tendencies towards reification and replication that follow from that

constitutive implication between temporal ethics and the historical.

As I also noted in my introduction to this thesis, if Levinas' and the early Deleuze's work can be seen as taking up the first of these options for resolving the problem of history that emerges in Bergson's metaphysical writings, the second option seems to be taken up by Bergson *himself* in *The Two Sources*. Indeed, in that text, Bergson appears to precisely *historicise* his conception of intuition by extensively reflecting on the "support" that the intuition (now understood in its mystical guise) can receive from decidedly social and historical factors like mechanism and static religion.[213] Now, if *The Two Sources* historicises the intuition, then *perhaps* it also provides a successful resolution to what I have here called the problem of history. Perhaps Bergson himself finds a way of negotiating the tendencies towards reification and replication that follow from the intuition's involvement with history. But is this resolution *actually* provided in *The Two Sources*, or does Bergson there continue to uphold the primacy and purity of intuition against all history? This is the next chapter's central question.

[213] TSMR 309. This historicisation is precisely what the early Deleuze (2004b: 41) finds significant in *The Two Sources*, even if he also warns that we should not overplay its importance: "This text is all the more important since it is one of the few in which Bergson accords a specificity to the historical with respect to the vital. (….) True, the function of this historical consciousness of difference should not be exaggerated. According to Bergson, more than providing something new, it liberates what is already there."

2. Bergson II: towards a historicisation of the intuition in *The Two Sources*?

The last chapter argued that Bergson's metaphysical intuition remains constitutively implicated with socio-historical factors. I also argued that this implication presents a *problem* for Bergson's philosophy, one that his metaphysical writings are ultimately incapable of resolving due to their repeated insistence that the intuition is isolatable from any such constitutive involvement with the social. Nevertheless, as I also hinted in conclusion to the last chapter, we would not be doing justice to Bergson by maintaining that his thought is *exclusively* guided by a tendency to isolate the intuition from the social. Indeed, while this impulse certainly dominates Bergson's metaphysical writings, his penultimate major work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, also contains many assertions that together can be seen as formulating an alternative tendency.

In that work, Bergson attempts to show how the intuition—now understood as a certain type of mystical experience—can contribute towards the creation of an "open society" that is inherently receptive to the temporal force of the new.[1] In this new mystical role, the intuition's function is no longer limited to the acquisition of knowledge of duration.[2] The intuition now begins to play a *social* or *political* role as that which enables agents to supersede the "closed" or instinctive attachment to moral obligation and religion that has hitherto dominated the natural history of humanity. Perhaps more importantly for my focus in this thesis, though these intuitive exercises remain understood as "leaps" beyond human history, they are now also defined as being in a certain sense *dependent* on the very history that they attempt to surpass.[3] More precisely, for Bergson, the mysticism of open societies can be successful only if it deploys all-too-human forces, like mechanism, as its *support*: "Man will rise [*soulèvera*] above earthly things only if a powerful equipment supplies him with the point of

[1] TSMR 238-240.
[2] Riffing on Levinas, we might say that the intuition now becomes a means "to love rather than to equalize by knowledge." ON 129.
[3] TSMR 74, 223.

support [*point d'appui*]. He must use matter as a support if he wants to get away from it."[4] In these two senses, then, it appears that Bergson's penultimate work goes much further than his metaphysical writings in recognising the reciprocal *dependency* between the intuition and the social. At the very least, that text appears to *tend* towards another—more thoroughly historicised—understanding of the way the intuition operates in relation to its social conditions.[5]

But does *The Two Sources* in fact actualise this tendency? Does Bergson go as far as maintaining that intuitive mystical experience is constitutively *vivified* by society, or does that experience's essential force continue to come from elsewhere? This is the question that I want to pose in this chapter. This question is crucial, I contend, because only by answering it can we decide whether *The Two Sources* in fact provides an adequate resolution to the problem of history that arises in Bergson's metaphysical writings. If by historicising the intuition *The Two Sources* goes beyond the scope of those writings, then perhaps it also offers us valuable suggestions for successfully negotiating the dangerous tendencies that can arise from the intuition's constitutive involvement history. However, and despite Bergson's aforementioned claims on mechanism, it remains unclear whether this historicisation of the intuition is actually delivered in *The Two Sources*. The suspicion that it is not is initially suggested by Bergson's repeated claims that it is *possible* for mystical experience to acquire a sense that falls "outside [*dehors*]" of all socio-historical coordinates.[6] It is deepened by that fact that, while Bergson at several points reminds us that there is seldom any purity between mysticism and socio-historical factors, that purity *is* nonetheless sometimes said to be "*actually attained*."[7] This suggests that though determined social forces (like mechanism and static religion) can certainly assist the "success" of mysticism,

[4] TSMR 309 (translation modified); cf. MM 22.
[5] Worms (2004: 86; cf. 2012: 39) argues that *The Two Sources* develops a conception of ethics where ethics always takes place "without at any time leaving the field of human history for that of a transcendent metaphysics." That said, Worms also cautions that this "thesis would need a careful verification in the text itself" (39). I provide this verification in this chapter, but contend that far from supporting Worms' thesis, the textual evidence supports instead an opposite reading.
[6] TSMR 99.
[7] TSMR 51 (emphasis added).

that assistance is perhaps also not as *constitutive* to the essential force and sense of the latter as some of Bergson's other claims might lead us to believe.[8]

Now, in this chapter, I want to argue that despite that making this thought possible, *The Two Sources* falls short of ascribing to socio-historical factors a *constitutive* role in the practice of intuitively opening oneself to life's temporal force. As I seek to show, for Bergson, although social forces can certainly aid the "diffusion" or "dissemination" of mysticism across human societies, the essential sense of mystical experience continues to be derived from "elsewhere".[9] Mystical experience continues to be understood in terms of the *fundamental* and *immediate* relation that human beings are capable of entertaining with the vital impetus of life itself—the *élan vital*. And for Bergson, the crucial aspect of this vital relation is that it takes place "beneath" or "below" the "stratifications" of society and history.[10] Rather than engaging time on the basis of the forms of actuality that surround them, mystics are therefore said to intuitively experience vital forces only by going "beyond these manifestations".[11] As such, rather than developing a more historicised understanding of how we might ethically relate ourselves to the novelty of time, the description of mystical experience that emerges in *The Two Sources* in fact remains fundamentally aligned with the ahistorical tendencies of Bergson's earlier metaphysical writings. In this sense, I contend, *The Two Sources* fails to provide an adequate resolution to the problem of history that arises in Bergson's metaphysical writings.

I make this argument in three stages. I begin, in section one, by providing a brief outline of Bergson's account of closed societies. In section two, I turn my focus to his account of open societies, paying particular attention to the intuition's role in fostering those alternative forms of social organisation. In section three, I concentrate on Bergson's account of the

[8] TSMR 211.
[9] TSMR 179, 316.
[10] *The Two Sources* repeatedly describes mystical experience as a search for life that consists of digging beneath the stratifications of society: "it has been given only to a chosen few to dig down, first beneath the strata of the acquired then beneath nature, and so get back into the very impetus of life." TSMR 273.
[11] TSMR 101.

relation between the intuition and two of the main historical stratifications of closed societies—static religion and mechanism—to argue that Bergson's conception of intuition in *The Two Sources* remains essentially ahistorical. I conclude by reflecting on the implications this raises for a resolution of what I have thus far called the problem of history.

2.1. The first source of ethics: closed society

Bergson begins *The Two Sources* by providing an extensive account of how obligation has become instituted in human societies. Against the moral rationalism of thinkers like Kant, for whom moral rules of conduct necessarily follow from the *a priori* workings of reason, Bergson contends that obligation is in the first instance derived from *habit*.[12] As he writes, it is impossible to live in society with others without in some way engaging in habitual patterns of activity: "From the first standpoint, social life [*la vie sociale*] appears to us as a system of more or less deeply rooted habits, corresponding to the needs of the community."[13] Taken in their isolation, each of these habits possesses a relatively limited power to influence the life of human beings.[14] But because all habits correspond to the needs of a particular community, they display a natural tendency to mutually support one another: "they all hang together, they form a solid block."[15] Taken in their totality, habits can thus become a powerful force in the lives of human beings. To depart from one habitual form of activity, individuals have to come up against the combined strength of all social forces.[16] And for Bergson, it is as a function of this combined force of habit that individuals first feel themselves morally obligated.[17] The totality of habits "exerts a pressure on our will", and that explains why we

[12] TSMR 20-21.
[13] TSMR 10.
[14] Marrati, 2006: 595-596.
[15] TSMR 10.
[16] TSMR 14.
[17] As Ansell-Pearson (2018: 117) points out, in making this claim "Bergson is not denying that reason intervenes as a regulator to assure consistency between rules and maxims but claiming that [to think of obligation purely in rational terms] oversimplifies what is actually taking place in the becoming of a moral agent."

feel ourselves compelled to act in certain ways.[18] Far from being determined by the requirements of an abstract reason, obligation thus derives from the *pressure* that the totality of habits exerts on human beings: "here you have the totality of obligation for a simple, elementary, moral conscience."[19]

For Bergson, this force that habit imposes on human communities is somewhat akin to the role that instinct plays in insect societies.[20] Just like an ant necessarily and ceaselessly works for the good the anthill, so too, the totality of habits seemingly imposes on human individuals the necessity to act in ways that uphold the framework of their community.[21] When human beings largely follow this apparent necessity of social obligation, they can be said to occupy a "closed" society.[22] As Bergson describes them, closed societies are partly defined by the work their members perform in upholding a particular form of social organisation. In such societies, the individual "is part and parcel of society; he and it are absorbed together in the same task of individual and social preservation."[23] This entails that closed societies display a strong natural tendency towards stability and invariability. Although they can, and most certainly do, undergo changes throughout the course of history, they remain in their essential aspect enchained to the task of communal self-preservation.[24] It is, moreover, in terms of this tendency towards collective self-preservation that individuals in closed societies come to grasp not only themselves, but also their relation to other individuals. As Bergson writes, this type of attachment to the social in a certain sense describes our condition as human beings: "Each of us belongs as much to society as to himself (….) and it is on the surface, at the point where it inserts itself into the close-woven tissue of other exteriorised personalities, that our ego generally finds its point of attachment;

[18] TSMR 10, cf. TFW 135.
[19] TSRM 25.
[20] TSMR 26.
[21] cf. CE 166-167.
[22] TSMR 30.
[23] TSRM 37.
[24] TSMR 266.

its solidity lies in this solidarity."[25] That is not to say that closed society is the *only* place to which subjectivity is capable of attaching itself. In the depths of "our innermost selves, if we know how to look for it, we may perhaps discover another sort of equilibrium, still more desirable than the one on the surface."[26] For the most part, however, our participation in society requires us to relate to ourselves on the basis of the closed interests of our community: "To cultivate this social ego is the essence of our obligation to society."[27] And it is thus that human life can be said to resemble the life of insect societies.

As Bergson variously insists, however, we cannot overestimate this comparison between human and insect societies. Although these two forms of organisation both actualise a "vague ideal" towards social life that inheres in nature itself, there nonetheless remain important differences between them.[28] Most markedly, whereas insect societies are dictated by *instinct*, human societies are governed by the *intelligence*. And as Bergson maintains, it would be a "great mistake" to consider the cohesive and obligatory character of closed, human societies as a by-product of instinct.[29] To do so would be to neglect that "in an hive or an ant-hill the individual is riveted to his task by his structure, and the organisation is relatively invariable, whereas the human community is variable in form, open to every kind of progress."[30] To conceive social habit or obligation instinctively would be to ignore that where individual insects have a very limited field of autonomy vis-à-vis their community, "individual humans have a great deal of social autonomy, and as a result humans can use their intelligence to construct a wide range of divergent social systems."[31] Hence, the social pressure human beings face is not, despite appearances, an actual *necessity*.[32] By virtue of their natural intelligence, human beings always retain a margin of freedom to diverge from

[25] TSMR 14-15.
[26] TSMR 14-15.
[27] TSMR 15.
[28] TSMR 27.
[29] True, obligation and habit function as a kind of "virtual instinct" in human societies. But this virtuality operates, we will see shortly, only *through* the intelligence. TSMR 28, 100.
[30] TSMR 27-28.
[31] Bogue, 2007: 92; TSMR 266.
[32] TSMR 29.

the demands that social habit and obligation impose on their existence.[33] Thus, although the intelligence normally operates to maintain those two social forces, in certain circumstances, it can also act as a "*dissolvent power*" in relation to them.[34] The flexibility that the intelligence introduces can thus also become a cause of instability for the cohesiveness of closed human societies.[35]

If the cohesion of closed societies is nonetheless actually maintained, this is because something in them counter-acts the intelligence's tendency towards social instability. In closed societies, this is precisely the role of *static religion*. As Bergson explains, one of the main functions of religion in closed societies is that of preventing individuals from diverging from society's natural interest in cohesion, stability and closure. Similarly, that religion also prevents individuals from focusing too strongly on the inevitability of their own death, just as it ensures the continuity between individual action and the effect desired by it.[36] Now, to achieve these aims, static religion cannot rely upon instinct, for due to the natural course of evolution, instinctive forces no longer "directly" affect human beings.[37] Instead, static religion has had to find ways to deploy the intelligence *against itself* by creating representations that—despite also being of an intellectual origin—are nonetheless capable of tempering the anti-social impulses of individual intellectual acts.[38] In other words, static religion has had to deploy a "myth-making function [*fonction fabulatrice*]" in order to create illusory or imaginary representations that nonetheless have *real effects* on individual conduct: "failing real experience, a counterfeit of experience had to be conjured up."[39] For Bergson, this is how religious phenomena as diverse as taboo*,* mythology and magic must be understood. Rather than finding their specificity in given historical or cultural imperatives, such phenomena are

[33] Bergson claims that this margin of freedom usually expresses itself in terms of egoism. TSMR 93-94, 122, 210.
[34] TSMR 122.
[35] "An intelligent being bears within himself the means to transcend his own nature." CE 151.
[36] See, respectively: TSMR 131, 140.
[37] TSMR 119.
[38] For Bergson, this process is entirely natural and follows directly from the fact that "religion, being coextensive with our species, must pertain to our structure" *qua* living beings. TSMR 176.
[39] TSMR 109.

merely the surface "manifestations" of a *deeper* attempt by nature to bind individuals to society through a turning of the intelligence against itself.[40] Or, as Bergson puts it, the static religion of closed societies is "*a defensive reaction of nature against what might be depressing for the individual, and dissolvent for society, in the exercise of intelligence*."[41] Static religion is one of the means by which closed societies naturally maintain themselves as *closed*, and its products are nothing more than "representations formed naturally by intelligence, by way of safeguarding itself, through certain beliefs, against certain dangers of [intellectual] knowledge."[42] In this way, we can define closed societies as having two main features. First, those societies are defined by the moral pressure that they impose on individuals through social obligation. This pressure, which follows directly from natural force of habit, is one that compels individuals to continually work—both in their relations with themselves and others—towards the common interests of their community. Secondly, those societies are also defined by their static religiosity, which, in a similar way, also naturally binds individuals to society. Bergson summarises it thus: "This religion, which we have called static, and this obligation, which is tantamount to a pressure, are the very substance of closed society."[43]

Now, for Bergson, it is important to recognise that though closed societies are natural, they by no means provide human individuals with the capacity to engage with the principle that is generative of life itself—that is, the *élan vital*. As Bergson had already explained in *Creative Evolution*, when humanity engages with the world on the basis of the intelligence, it displays a "*natural inability to comprehend life*."[44] Because it works by representing the fundamental mobility of life as a series of distinct states, and because it engages with the

[40] Throughout *The Two Sources*, Bergson continually rejects the idea that the phenomena of cultural transmission and heredity have any real effect on the *fundamental* or *natural* structure of human existence. As he writes: "The natural, then, is to-day what it has always been. True, things happen *as if* it had been transformed, since all that society has acquired overlays it (…). But let a sudden shock paralyse these superficial activities (…): at once the natural reappears, like the changeless star in the night." TSMR 160-161 (emphasis added).
[41] TSMR 205.
[42] TSMR 162.
[43] TSMR 266-267.
[44] CE 165.

future only on the basis of the solidities that it can expect and anticipate, the intelligence, unlike instinct, finds itself unable to engage "the generative force of life."[45] Returning to *The Two Sources*, we see that the intelligence's dual maintenance of the habitual pressure of moral obligation and the illusory representations of static religion also carries with it certain ethical consequences. By remaining within the confines of closed societies, human individuals find themselves restricted in their capacity for engaging with life's temporal impulse.[46] In closed societies, their "attachment to life" always *passes through* the detour of closed society.[47] "Static religion, such as we find it when it stands alone, attaches man to life, and consequently individual to society, by telling him tales on par with those with which we lull children to sleep."[48] Within the confines of closed societies, individuals thus engage with life's creative impetus only on the basis of those intellectual representations that also solidify and distort that impetus' temporal novelty. In this sense, the individuals of closed societies remain disconnected from the openness and becoming of life itself: "At once individual and social, the soul here moves round in a circle. It is closed."[49]

2.2. The second source of ethics: life

We have seen Bergson claim that one of the two sources of morality consists of the natural demands towards self-preservation that closed societies impose upon individuals through the combined forces of habit and static religion. We have also seen that these social forces effectively divorce humanity from the generative impulse of life itself, and that they thus prevent individuals from grasping time "as it really is—uninterrupted creation, the

[45] CE 186.
[46] Using the language of *Matter and Memory*, we might say that the social forces of static religion and moral obligation not only fundamentally determine our "attention to life" (MM xvii-xix, 173-174). In doing so through the *intelligence*, those habitual social forces also operate as a "diminishing" of our perceptive contact with time (45). cf. ME 5.
[47] For an informative account of Bergson's notion of "attachment to life", see: Lapoujade, 2018: 59-80.
[48] TSMR 210.
[49] TSMR 38.

uninterrupted up-surge of novelty."[50] Now, as Bergson clarifies in the final chapter of *The Two Sources*, this exploration of closed societies would be of "little practical utility if closed society had always been so constituted as to shut itself up again after each momentary opening."[51] In other words, from an *ethical* point of view, there would be little to gain from defining closed societies if human experience did not also present individuals with a capacity for living *otherwise than* habit and static religion in relation to the temporality of life. Fortunately, as Bergson notes, what singles out humanity from the rest of the animal kingdom is precisely its capacity for freedom and change in relation to habitual social forces.[52] Or, as Deleuze writes of Bergson: "man is capable of scrambling the planes [*plans*], of going beyond his own plane as his own condition."[53] And in this factor rests humanity's potential for living beyond the habitual confines of closed societies. By cultivating its rapport with the forces of life, humanity can find another means of living; it can find another, more dynamic morality that is more closely connected with the temporal force of life in general.[54]

For Bergson, we can begin to see how humanity is capable of transcending its condition in closed societies by noting that human beings are not *necessarily* bound to engage with the world on the basis of the intellect. We saw a variation of this argument in chapter one, where Bergson claimed that beyond the intelligence, humanity is also capable of engaging time through the intuition. In *The Two Sources*, Bergson takes a slightly different route (even if, as we will see shortly, this new route remains aligned with the thought of metaphysical intuition). There, Bergson insists that *beneath* and *before* the operation of intellectual representations, human beings are also capable of being affected by feeling (*sentiment*) or emotion (*émotion*). For Bergson, nothing exemplifies this fact better than the act of listening to music: "We feel, while we listen, as though we could not desire anything else but what the

[50] CM 7.
[51] TSMR 271.
[52] Marrati, 2006: 597.
[53] B 107.
[54] TSMR 269.

music is suggesting to us".[55] In this experience, there is no practical impulse, reflection or analysis that mediates our relation to the feelings that are expressed by a musical piece. We are "introduced" into those feelings *directly*, as it were, and it is only "through excess of intellectualism that feeling is made to hinge on an object and that all emotion is held to be the reaction of our sensory faculties to an intellectual representation."[56] Now, on the basis of this example, Bergson contends that we must in fact distinguish between two different types of human emotion, or two varieties of feeling by which human beings can become affected:

> In the first case the emotion is the consequence of an idea, or of a mental picture; the 'feeling' is indeed the result of an intellectual state which owes nothing to it (…). It is the stirring of sensibility by a representation, as it were, dropped into it. But the other kind of emotion is not produced by a representation which it follows and from which it remains distinct. Rather it is, in relation to the intellectual states which are to supervene, a cause [*cause*] and not an effect [*effet*]; it is pregnant with representations, not one of which is actually formed, but which it draws or might draw from it its own substance by an organic development. The first is infra-intellectual (…). But of the other we should be inclined that it is supra-intellectual (…): it is just as much a question of priority in time [*antériorité dans le temps*], and of the relation between that which generates [*engendre*] and that which is generated [*engendré*]. Indeed, the second kind of emotion can alone be generative [*génératrice*] of ideas.[57]

If there are two types of emotion, they are clearly not of the same status. One of those emotions, the "creative emotion", is both *prior* to, and *generative* of, the emotion that is capable of being conveyed by intellectual representation.[58] As it follows a process of organic development, this creative emotion does, to be sure, tend to become materialised, incorporated or even crystallised into intellectual representations.[59] But it becomes involved with intellectual representations in this way only *insofar as it also remains the vital cause* (and not the effect) of those same representations. As Bergson writes a couple of pages

[55] TSMR 39-40.
[56] TSMR 40.
[57] TSMR 44.
[58] "Creation signifies, above all, emotion, and that not in literature or art alone." TSMR 45, 95.
[59] cf. TSMR 47.

later: “It is the [creative] emotion above all which vivifies [*vivifie*], or rather vitalises [*vitalise*], the intellectual elements with which it is destined to unite”.[60] Crucially, moreover, this type of emotion, despite being prior to intellectual representations, is not simply an ideal limit towards which human experience continually tends. Just like the intuition is in principle accessible as a faculty to everyone, so too, Bergson contends, almost “anyone” can “feel the difference between an intelligence left to itself and that which burns with the fire of an original and unique emotion”.[61] Thus, although individuals in closed societies most generally act in accordance with intellectual representations, they are all, nonetheless, *also capable of being moved by another force*. They are also capable of being directly affected by an impulse or emotion that is the very cause of intellectual representations themselves.

True, for Bergson, this immediate experience of creative emotion still requires a sustained “effort” on the part of individuals.[62] It is also the case that the majority of people fail to attain this effort. Nevertheless, since the potentiality for an immediate experience of creative emotion *exists*, “it was not impossible that some [individuals], specially gifted, should reopen that which was closed and do, at least for themselves, what nature could not possibly have done for mankind.”[63] Put differently, what the experience of creative emotion heralds for humanity is a break from the circle of natural tendencies that constitute closed societies. Beyond the static morality and religiosity of closed societies, the creative emotion signals a very different type of social organisation, one that is more closely aligned with the creative impetus of emotion and which is thus more closely “attached [*rattache*] to life in general”.[64]

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[60] TSMR 46.

[61] TSRM 46; cf. ME 23. That said, women are, for Bergson, generally less capable of creative emotion than men: “Suffice it to say that woman is as intelligent as man, but that she is less capable of emotion, and that if there is any faculty or power of the soul which seems to attain less development in woman than in man, it is not intelligence, but sensibility. I mean of course sensibility in the depths, not agitation at the surface” (TSMR 44). For a feminist critique of Bergson on these and other points, see: Hill, 2008: 119-131; Hill, 2012: 91-125.

[62] cf. TSMR 39, 52.

[63] TSMR 57.

[64] TSMR 269 (translation modified).

This alternative form of social organisation is what Bergson calls the open society. In contrast to closed societies, the open society is not primarily structured around the pressure of habit. As Bergson clarifies, though there is still something of moral obligation in the open society, that obligation is no longer simply the effect of the combined force of habitual forms of social activity. Instead, in the dynamic morality of the open society, "obligation is the force of an *aspiration* or an impetus, of the very impetus which culminated in the human species, in social life, in a system of habits which bears a resemblance more or less to instinct".[65] Put differently, dynamic morality receives its moral direction from the temporality of life *itself*. If its individuals feel themselves moved to act in a certain way, this is because the direction for this activity is set by their *direct exposure* to that creative impetus which is generative of the "merely social" manifestations of closed societies.[66] Rather than merely going around in the circle of obligation and static religiosity, individuals in the open society thus feel themselves carried by "the enthusiasm of a forward movement"; they begin to feel and act in accordance with the very "progress" of the *élan vital*.[67] In this way, the natural impulses towards social cohesion and self-preservation no longer drive the morality of the open society forward. Neither can it be said that dynamic morality remains defined by the ready-made or intellectual representations that constitute static forms of religiosity. As Deleuze puts this point: "This [morality] no longer has anything to do with the pressures of society, nor with the disputes of the individual. It no longer has anything to do with an individual who contests or even invents, nor with a society that constrains, that persuades or even tells stories."[68] In an open society, it is life itself, understood as the *élan vital*, that operates as the source of ethics: "the primitive impetus here comes into play directly [*directement*], and no longer though the medium [*l'intermédiaire*] of the mechanisms it had set up, and at which it had provisionally halted."[69]

[65] TSMR 55 (emphasis added).
[66] TSMR 35.
[67] TSMR 51.
[68] B 111.
[69] TSMR 55.

Bergson specifies the content of the aspiration that propels the open society in terms of a love for humanity.[70] This love cannot be reduced to the social solidarity that pervades closed societies. In closed societies, social solidarity always has a determinate object as its point of focus: "a people, a nation, a community, and so on."[71] Moreover, the distinctions between such objects are always carved up in function of those societies' interest in self-preserving activity. By contrast, the solidarity that is established in the open society, because it is directly propelled by a creative impulse that admits of no such distinctions, takes a much wider 'object' as its focal point.[72] This solidarity extends to the whole of humanity, and it may even, Bergson claims, "extend to animals, to plants, to all nature."[73] Now, for Bergson, the important point to grasp here is that this love for humanity is not generated by a *quantitative* process of expansion: we do not arrive at a love of humanity by merely broadening out the circles of the family and the social groups to which we naturally belong.[74] As he writes, an individual's attachment to "the family and the social group are the only ones ordained by nature, the only ones corresponding to instinct", but the "love of humanity is a very different thing. It is not the extension of an instinct."[75] The love of humanity, which is also a form of "fraternity", consists of "a leap beyond nature [*bond hors de la nature*]".[76] More accurately, it consists of a leap beyond nature as it has *already become constituted, solidified or stratified* as the manifestations of closed societies: "in passing from social solidarity to the brotherhood of man, we break with one particular nature, but not with all nature. It might be

[70] "[I]t has always been from the contact [*contact*] with the generative principle of the human species that a man has felt he drew the strength to love humanity." TSMR 54.
[71] Marrati, 2006: 599.
[72] As Paola Marrati (2006: 599) notes, properly speaking, the aspiration of the open society "has no object, not because its object would be too large or too vague and consequently difficult to describe but because the opening *as* opening does not have an object. Every object assigned to it from the outset, even if it were the entire universe, would close it."
[73] TSMR 38.
[74] As Ansell-Pearson argues (2018: 122), this dissociation of a love of humanity from a process of expansion "discloses Bergson's commitment to real movement. This [love] cannot take place by a series of discrete stages, as in Zeno's paradoxes, which cannot produce real movement, but via an action in which we find the impression of a coincidence (…) with the generative effort of life."
[75] TSMR 234.
[76] TSMR 223. The notion of a fraternity opening onto humanity is also key to Levinas' philosophy in *Totality and Infinity*: TI 278-280.

said, by slightly distorting the terms of Spinoza, that it is to get back to *natura naturans* that we break away from *natura naturata*."[77]

This emphasis on the love of humanity also reveals that the difference between open and closed societies is not one of degree but one of kind. As Bergson writes, "between the society in which we live and humanity and general there is, we repeat, the same contrast as between the closed and the open; the difference between the two objects is one of kind and not simply one of degree."[78] More concretely, though both of these types of societies operate under the guidance of ideals and principles that are in language the same (such as, for example, "charity" and "justice"), the force that sustains them is in each case radically different.[79] In closed societies, as repeatedly noted, it is the force of natural society that determines how an ideal will become socially or politically established. That ideal is received via natural means as a ready-made concept, and what is left out of this process is precisely the vital force of the new.[80] In the open society, by contrast, the application of political principles does not consist of a repetition of the old. Because that application is in each instance invigorated and driven forward by the force of the *élan vital*, the result is always the creation of a "new social atmosphere" where humanity is itself stamped with a renewed vitality.[81] Rather than being determined by the "state of mind of a society at a given period of its history", in the open society humanity becomes progressively determined in function of the vital process of production of the new.[82] And once again, the difference here is not one of degree: "The two things are not of the same essence."[83]

But given that for Bergson we mostly inhabit closed societies, and given that the natural impulses of those societies are generally "co-extensive" with the structure of our species,

[77] TSMR 58.
[78] TSMR 32.
[79] TSMR 81.
[80] TSMR 79.
[81] TSMR 80.
[82] TSMR 74; cf. Marrati, 2006: 601.
[83] TSMR 267.

how can we make the qualitative transition from the closed to the open?[84] How can we begin to inhabit an open society that is more receptive and welcoming of the temporal force of the new? On Bergson's reading, as I have already hinted, although a direct exposure to the *élan vital* is in principle accessible to everyone, it remains the case that, at least initially, the transition between the closed and the open must be engendered by the efforts of a few "exceptional" individuals.[85] These individuals are classified by *The Two Sources* as mystics. On this account, mystics are those individuals who are capable of engendering "the establishment of a contact [*contact*], consequently of a partial coincidence [*coïncidence partielle*], with the creative effort which life itself manifests."[86] Put differently, mystics are those human individuals who are capable of raising themselves above the intellectual and habitual representations of closed societies, to engage with that creative or vital emotion that is the generative force of all life in general. True mystics, Bergson claims, directly expose themselves to the *élan vital*, and they thereby experience its force "in its immediacy [*d'immédiat*], apart [*dehors*] from all interpretation."[87] "True mystics simply open [*ouvrent simplement*] their souls to the oncoming wave."[88] Moreover, it is through this process of opening—through this immediate coincidence that mystics establish with the *élan vital* beyond the representations of closed societies—that they become capable of bringing about a spiritual change in the condition of humanity.[89] In effect, by establishing an immediate contact with the temporal impetus of life, mystics create themselves as points of rupture and openness for the closure of closed societies.[90] They begin to invigorate those societies with the powers of time, and it is through their "genius" that "the impetus of life, traversing matter, wrests from it, for the future of the species, promises such as were out of the question when

[84] TSMR 176, cf. 30.
[85] TSMR 245-246.
[86] TSMR 220; ME 24.
[87] TSMR 99.
[88] TSMR 99.
[89] Relatedly, Bergson writes in *Mind-Energy*: "it is the moral man who is a creator in the highest degree, the man whose action, itself intense, is also capable of intensifying the action of other men, and, itself generous, can kindle fires on the hearths of generosity." ME 24.
[90] "In man alone, especially among the best of mankind, the vital movement pursues its way without hindrance, thrusting through that work of art, the human body, which it has created on its way, the creative current of the moral life." ME 24.

the species was being constituted."[91] It is through the medium of mystical souls that closed societies become open and finally begin to express, through the ever-forward movement that the *élan vital* now brings to bear upon them, the very force of the new.[92]

But how is this direct experience of the *élan vital* reached by mystical souls? How are mystical souls able to divorce themselves from those intellectual representations or interpretations that bind them to closed societies? On Bergson's account, this process finds at least part of its possibility in in the fringe of intuition that lingers around the intelligence.[93] As Bergson explains with reference to his earlier writings, if the intuition is capable of playing a role in allowing us to "realise the continuity of our inner life, a deeper intensification might carry it to the roots of our being, and thus to the very principle of life in general. Now, is this not precisely the privilege of the mystical soul?"[94] A few pages later, Bergson provides a more direct answer to this question: "if the fringe of intuition surrounding [the] intelligence is capable of expanding sufficiently to envelop its object, that is the mystic life."[95] In other words, mystical souls are able to play an opening role for humanity because they effectively seize and extend the capacity for intuition that pertains to all human beings. Mystics intensify the intuition to the point where it becomes contact with the *élan vital* itself, to the point where it becomes "mystical intuition."[96] Now, as Bergson describes it, this type of intuition certainly shares some features with the metaphysical intuition. Like metaphysical intuition, mystical intuition "consists in working back from the intellectual and social plane to a point" that is beyond the manifestations of closed societies.[97] Indeed, just as metaphysical intuition "detaches" itself from all those objects and distinctions that might serve a practical purpose

[91] TSMR 58.
[92] cf. B 111.
[93] Jacques Maritain (1968: 331) argues that "Bergson does not leave us with any means of choosing between the service of society and the call of the hero." But this reading seems to ignore the explicit role that *The Two Sources* attributes to the intuition as the faculty that lifts us above the service of closed society. cf. CE 49.
[94] TSMR 250, cf. 212.
[95] TSMR 268.
[96] TSMR 264.
[97] In this passage, Bergson also appears to hint at a definition of mystical intuition as a 'method': TSMR 253.

in every day life, so too, the mystical intuition operates as a type of "detachment from each particular thing".[98] In both cases, we are dealing with *more* than that which merely interests us as a practical member of a closed society.[99] In moving beyond the manifestations of closed societies, mystical intuition can also become a means of resolving some of the "false problems"—like the status of the existence of nothingness or of God—that have hitherto troubled humanity.[100] As Bergson writes, for the mystical soul (as for the metaphysician exercising the intuition), "these questions simply do not exist, they are optical illusions arising, in the inner world, from the structure of human intelligence, they recede and disappear as the mystic rises superior to the human point of view."[101]

This is not to suggest that mystical intuition is in all respects similar to metaphysical intuition. Even if it simply 'expands' or 'intensifies' metaphysical intuition, mystical intuition is not simply, or no longer, a form of *knowledge* or vision of duration.[102] Bergson specifies that what "above all" distinguishes mystical from metaphysical intuition is the fact that the former is consummated "in *action*."[103] Put differently, unlike metaphysical intuition, which merely gave us a knowledge or grasp of duration, mystical intuition results in a type of activity or creation that effectively modifies the shape of humanity. True mystics, for Bergson, do not content themselves with merely contemplating the continuity of duration.[104] In moving beyond the manifestations of closed societies, they also strive to *modify* humanity and to bring a change into it via *activity*. But this activity, Bergson clarifies, is unlike the practical activity that we undertake in everyday life; it is no longer simply a function of the practical interests that govern a closed society. Because it flows from the mystic soul's direct exposure to the *élan vital*, this activity is no longer of the order of the stratifications and

[98] CM 114; TSMR 212.
[99] CM 114.
[100] TSMR 247; cf. CE 238.
[101] TSMR 251.
[102] For Bergson, 'expansion' and 'intensification' are terms that both suggest a quantitative as opposed to a qualitative difference.
[103] TSMR 212.
[104] As Deleuze (B 111) writes: "If man accedes to the open creative totality, it is therefore by acting, by creating rather than by contemplating."

representations of closed societies: it is a "divine activity" that immediately "flows from a spring which is the very source of life."[105] Thus, if mystics are moved into action by their intuitive practices, we should not confuse this activity with that which takes place at the level of habitual forms of social interaction: "Shaken to its depths by the current which is about to sweep it forward, the soul [here] ceases to revolve around itself and escapes for a moment from the law which demands that the species and the individual should condition one another."[106] Through mystic intuition, the soul begins to be moved by "a unique emotion, an impulse, an impetus received from the very depths of things."[107]

In its mystical guise, the intuition therefore begins to play a *political* or *social* role as that which enables the progressive creation of an open society. Mystical intuition becomes the means *by which* closed societies become invigorated with the force of a creative emotion, and thus progressively determined in function of the *élan vital*. True, this 'progression' does not have a clearly defined goal or ideal towards which it tends. As Bergson writes, "a mystic society, embracing all humanity and moving, animated by a common will, towards the continually renewed creation of a more complete humanity, is no more possible of realisation in the future than was the existence in the past of human societies functioning automatically and similar to animal societies."[108] Nevertheless, with each mystical act, humanity is capable of feeling itself moved towards the aspiration of the open society; it is capable of moving another step outside of the circle of closed societies towards a form of social organisation that is more attuned to the force of the new. As Paola Marrati summarises this point: "The force of [the] feeling [that is produced by the mystical intuition] has to do with this power to open us up to the new: the mystical source of morality and religion lies in this force; instead of being derived from social pressure, it is aspiration."[109] In giving the intuition a central role in the creation of the open society, Bergson therefore insists that it is possible for humanity

[105] TSMR 232.
[106] TSMR 230.
[107] TSMR 254.
[108] TSMR 84.
[109] Marrati, 2006: 600.

to open itself to the living force of time *otherwise than* via the stratifications of closed society. All that is required is a sustained effort, on the part of a few privileged individuals, to move beyond those stratifications. When that effort is accomplished, we can be under no doubt as to whether society is still revolving around the circle of the same: "A soul strong enough, noble enough to make this effort would not stop to ask whether the principle with which it is now in touch is the transcendent cause [*transcendante cause*] of all things or merely its earthly delegate [*délégation terrestre*]."[110]

2.3. Mysticism, static religion and mechanism

To recapitulate, for Bergson, humanity can find its organising principle in two radically different sources. On the one hand, humanity can become organised in function of the habitual interests and intellectual representations of closed societies. When it is guided by this source, humanity remains stuck in a circle of resemblance and similarity; its activity remains essentially divorced from the temporal force of the new. On the other hand, because humanity is also capable of seizing the fringe of intuition and emotion that lingers around the intelligence, it can like become guided by the force of life itself. Through the exercises of mystical intuition undertaken by privileged souls, humanity can begin to immediately expose itself to the radical novelty of the *élan vital* and it can thereby progressively determine itself in function of that impulse's creative force.

Now, framed in these terms, there seems to be a strict opposition between these two sources that are capable of guiding humanity. However, Bergson also repeatedly hints that these two sources have "been constantly intermingled", and that they may indeed "support" and "complement" one another.[111] This thought is clarified by Bergson's insistence that, unlike in the general evolution of life, where the material form that divergent tendencies have historically assumed prevents them from "reuniting to bring back again, stronger than it was"

[110] TSMR 212.
[111] TSMR 221, 298.

the original tendency from which they originally departed, the same does not apply to the evolution of social life.[112] In social life, two divergent tendencies are capable of simultaneous coexisting or developing "in the same individual, or in the same society."[113] And this means that the uninterrupted progress of one tendency does not necessarily have to lead to a complete dissolution of the other. Nor indeed does the unbridled pursuit of one tendency over another prevent them from bringing about a stronger return of the original tendency whence they both emerged—that is, the *élan vital*. In fact, Bergson argues, "a tendency on which two different views are possible can put forth its maximum, in quantity or quality, only if it materialises these two possibilities into moving realities, each one of which leaps forward and monopolises the available space, while the other is on the watch unceasingly for its own turn to come. Only thus will the content of the original tendency develop".[114]

In terms of Bergson's distinction between closed and open societies, this means that the tendencies towards intellectual representation and self-preserving activity that characterise the former are not *necessarily* a hindrance to the latter's efforts to bring about forms of life that are more attuned to the temporality of the new.[115] Those tendencies towards closure might even serve as a "support" for the aims of mysticism to return to the force of the vital impetus.[116] And indeed, when in the final two chapters of *The Two Sources* Bergson comes to consider the role that two of the central historical manifestations of closed societies—namely, static religious language and mechanism—might play in the propagation of mysticism, this is precisely how the interaction between those two sources is apparently framed.[117] As he writes with regard to mechanism in particular, it was the creation of machines (and the historical, socio-political organisations that they involve) that enabled a

[112] TSMR 294-295.
[113] TSMR 295.
[114] TSMR 297.
[115] cf. TSMR 293.
[116] TSMR 214.
[117] Although, as Worms (2012: 28-29) rightly argues, the distinction between mechanism and mysticism does not necessarily correspond to the distinction between the closed and the open, on Bergson's reading, it remains the case that mechanism has *historically* tended to promote the war-instinct that dominates closed societies.

"burning, active mysticism" to make its appearance in the world:

> with the advent of machines (...), with the advent also of political and social organisations which proved experimentally that the mass of people was not doomed (...) deliverance became possible in an entirely new sense; the mystical impulse, if operating anywhere with sufficient power, was no longer going to be stopped short by the impossibility of acting (...) instead of turning inwards and closing, the soul could open wide its gates to a universal love. Now these inventions and organisations are essentially Western; it is they who, in this case, have enabled [*permis*] mysticism to reach its end [*d'aller jusqu'au bout de lui-même*].[118]

Similarly, when Bergson considers the relation between mysticism and the linguistic forms that static religion takes, he not only that claims that "mysticism and religion are mutually cause and effect [*se conditionnent*]" of each other, but also that "pure mysticism (...) must be taken together with the substance [which expresses it], to be regarded as practically inseparable from it, if it is to be observed in an active state—since it was in this state that it finally imposed its sway upon the world."[119] In these passages, Bergson appears to claim that mysticism (and the intuitive activity it involves) itself owes something of its *possibility* to those historically determined forms of static organisation that it nonetheless attempts to escape. Although mysticism continues to be defined by Bergson as a leap beyond nature *as it has already become constituted or stratified in closed societies*, it appears that those stratifications might nonetheless have something to *contribute* to the success of mysticism itself.

These types of suggestions by Bergson have led recent commentators—like Frédéric Worms—to argue that *The Two Sources* in fact develops "a sort of politics of the in-between

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[118] TSMR 227 (translation modified).

[119] TSRM 239, 213. The second quotation in this sentence bears a similarity to *Matter and Memory*'s claim that there is a practical inseparability between a purely contemplative memory and a purely motor one: "In normal life, [these two extremes] are interpenetrating, so that each has to abandon some part of its original purity" (MM 155). Nevertheless, despite this insistence, Bergson also holds that these two limits "are really separate and fully visible only in exceptional [*exceptionnels*] cases" (168). A separation between them is therefore *possible*, but only *exceptionally*. And since mystics are themselves defined by Bergson as *exceptional*, this suggests, as I will attempt to demonstrate shortly, that a separation between mysticism and religious language *is* indeed possible.

that is neither metaphysical nor without any metaphysical implications."[120] Put differently, Bergson's text can be seen as articulating the possibility for an open ethics that does not rely on any appeal to a transcendent or rapturous experience. Because for Bergson the possibility and success of mystical intuition is itself *sustained* by "reason, science and political will and organisation," there is little sense in reading that intuition as requiring an abandonment of all that humanity has historically achieved in the domain of closed societies.[121] The superiority of humanity to open itself to the new is in fact prolonged and extended by the mechanisms of closed societies.[122] On this reading, although Bergson does perhaps have a tendency to express himself in this way, the opening of the mystical soul does not in fact require a complete turning away from all those political and social stratifications within which human beings normally find themselves implicated. On the contrary, by insisting that mysticism *requires* mechanism and static religion for its success, Bergson can be seen as recognising that "*there is something immediately ethical and political in the experience of life*."[123] He can be seen as arguing that even for the mystical soul, whose goal is to establish a contact with the *élan vital*, there is never a complete abandonment of the constitutive irreducibility of human history and politics.[124] Worms summarises it thus: "mysticism [for Bergson] is a compelling phenomenon that pulls us towards the limit of our conscious and moral experience *without at any time leaving the field of human history for that of a transcendent metaphysics*."[125]

Now, as I wrote at the outset of this chapter, the question of whether *The Two Sources* attributes a *constitutive* role to socio-historical factors in the exercise of mystical intuition is of the utmost importance for reading of Bergson that I developed in this thesis' first chapter. As I argued there, one issue that arises in Bergson's metaphysics is its failure to contend with the intuition's constitutive implication with determined forms of sociality. Now, if one

[120] Worms, 2012: 37-38.
[121] Ansell-Pearson, 2018: 130.
[122] Marrati, 2006: 597.
[123] Worms, 2004: 88.
[124] cf. Mullarkey, 1999: 160.
[125] Worms, 2004: 86 (emphasis added).

follows the reading proposed by scholars like Worms, it is precisely this implication that *The Two Sources* can be seen as acknowledging. According to this reading, by conceiving the relation between mystical intuition and static forms of sociality as one of mutual support and inseparability, Bergson seems precisely to be emphasising that mystical intuition is always in a certain sense *historically* determined. He seems to appreciate, that is, that the intuition finds at least part of its *possibility* and *sense* in determined socio-historical situations. In this way, *perhaps,* Bergson also provides us with a means to resolve the problem that followed from that implication, that is, the intuition's tendency—as a faculty that relies on history—to *replicate* the ideological phantasms of its surrounding social domain.

But is this historicisation actually concretised in *The Two Sources*? This is the question that I want to consider for the remainder of this chapter. For if readings like Worms' are certainly appealing, they are also somewhat hard to square with Bergson's repeated claims that 'true' mystics, when they engage in the intuition, find themselves separated—even if only for a moment—from the concrete political demands of closed societies.[126] Moreover, it is also the case that when Bergson considers what the manifestations of closed societies might bring to the success of mysticism, he often defines this success not in terms of the benefits that *individual intuitive acts* might themselves receive from the impulses of closed societies, but rather in terms of what function those impulses might serve in "*propagating*" and "*disseminating*" mysticism across humanity *as a whole*.[127] In this context, it remains to be decided whether, for Bergson, the mystical intuition is in fact regarded as receiving its possibility and sense from historically determined states of affairs. And to settle this question, I propose to focus the remainder of this chapter explicating just what Bergson takes the relation between mystical intuition and the manifestations of closed societies to be.

Let us begin by focusing on the relation between mystical intuition and the language of static religion. As noted above, Bergson's discussion of this relation culminates in the idea that mysticism and static religion are mutually cause and effect of each other. Now, Bergson

[126] TSMR 230.
[127] TSMR 179, cf. 211, 238-240, 268 (emphasis added).

opens this discussion by providing a brief genealogy of the main mystical movements that have appeared in human history: the pagan mysteries, ancient Greek philosophy, and Hindu and Buddhist thought.[128] On Bergson's reading, although each of these movements further opened the door to mysticism, none managed to attain "the ultimate end" of mysticism, that is, "the establishment of a contact, consequently of a partial coincidence, with the creative effort which life itself manifests."[129] Only the great Christian mystics attained this ultimate end.[130] But even they faced challenges, and the central obstacle they faced "is the same which prevented the creation of a divine humanity. Man has to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow; in other words, humanity is an animal species, and, as such, subject to the law which governs the animal world and condemns the living to batten upon the living."[131] Otherwise said, even the great Christian mystics had to contend with the fact humanity is embodied and that its great moral transformation into an open society demanded certain preparatory steps. Christian mysticism could *succeed* in spreading itself and transforming the whole of humanity, "only by passing on, from one man to another, slowly, a part of itself."[132] But how could it do that, Bergson asks? It could do so by one of two methods. The first option would consist of intensifying intellectual work to such an extent (in the form of increasing mechanisation) that humanity would thereby liberate itself from its embodied demands.[133] But this method, which Bergson admits carries with it "certain risks", could only be utilised much later, with the advent of industrialism.[134] Thus, early Christian mystics were left with no choice but to follow an entirely different method: "This consisted not in contemplating a general and immediate spreading of the mystic impetus, which was obviously impossible, but in imparting it, already weakened though it was, to a tiny handful of privileged souls which together would form a spiritual society; societies of this kind might multiply; (…) thus the impetus would be preserved and continued until such time as a

[128] TSMR 227.
[129] TSMR 220.
[130] TSMR 227.
[131] TSMR 235.
[132] TSMR 235.
[133] TSMR 235-236.
[134] TSMR 236.

profound change in the material conditions imposed on humanity by nature should permit, in spiritual matters, of a radical transformation."[135]

As Bergson himself argues, however, this general account simplifies a great deal, for it assumes that mystic societies were not themselves thoroughly imbued with the forms and language of static religion.[136] But this was not in fact the case: "the men to whom [the mystical soul] spoke already had their religion, the same, moreover, as his own. If he had visions, these visions showed him, in the form of images, what his religion had impressed on him in the form of ideas."[137] If mysticism initially found its expression in mystical societies, then it also became imbued with the abstract or linguistic teachings of those religious orders. In this context, the crucial question that emerges is whether these "abstract teachings are not at the root of mysticism, and if the latter has ever done more than go over the letter of the dogma, in order to retrace it in characters of flame."[138] Now, for Bergson, to answer this question we must recall that "the teaching of religion, like all teaching, is meant for the intelligence, and anything of a purely intellectual order can be brought within the reach of all men."[139] The linguistic teachings of religion are of an intellectual kind, and that is precisely what enables them to achieve a wide reception across human societies. Because humanity is well-equipped to receive intellectual messages, it was capable of acquiring, through the linguistic form of religion, "a little of what a few privileged souls possessed in full."[140] Through religion, humanity became capable of receiving a crystallised "extract" of that experience that the mystical soul undergoes when it engages the mystical intuition.[141]

But was this crystallised extract itself a 'cause' or 'origin' of mystical experience for those who received it? Not exactly, for as Bergson argues, an intellectual "doctrine which is but a doctrine has a poor chance indeed of giving birth to the glowing enthusiasm, the illumination,

[135] TSMR 236.
[136] TSMR 237.
[137] TSMR 237.
[138] TSMR 237, 250.
[139] TSMR 237.
[140] TSMR 238.
[141] TSMR 237-238.

the faith that moves mountains."[142] In other words, although the linguistic form of religion was capable of aiding mysticism in spreading to humanity an intellectualised extract of mystical experience, that outline, because it remained intellectual, was not in itself *sufficient* to cause the individuals who received it to become mystical souls.[143] For the extract that was propagated by religious language to become the enthusiasm of mystical experience, for it to become the activity and warmth of creative emotion, something *more* than religious language was still needed.[144] As Bergson writes, "mysticism means nothing, absolutely nothing, to the man who has no experience of it, however slight [*à celui qui n'en a pas éprouvé quelque chose*]."[145] And this means that for the individuals who received the message of religion to be turned into open souls, they would still have to attempt, *in isolation from that religious language*, to engender or "experience" in themselves the opening of mystical intuition.[146] They would still have to find ways to engage themselves with the creativity of the *élan vital* if what they received from linguistic religion was to be turned into more than a "broad outline" of the openness that is experienced by the mystical soul.[147] In this sense, if the linguistic expression of religion is capable of 'causing' a diffusion of mysticism across human societies, it is by no means a 'cause' of the *essential quality or sense of mystical experience itself*. Apart from its religious expression, mystical experience continues to "possess an original content [*contenu original*], drawn straight from the very well-spring of religion [*puisé independentement à la source même de la religion*], independent of all that religion owes to tradition, to theology, to the Churches."[148] *Independently* of the intellectuality of religious language, what continues to ensure the

[142] TSMR 238.
[143] As Bergson says earlier in the text, "the truth is that the doctrine cannot, as a purely intellectual representation, ensure the adoption and, above all, the practice of the corresponding morality". TSRM 48-49.
[144] Bergson writes that the mystical soul cannot help but spread the vital force of the *élan vital*. "Only, it is not by mere words that he will spread it." TSMR 233.
[145] TSMR 237.
[146] As Bergson writes in "Life and Consciousness" (ME 24) for the teachings of religion to be useful, they must be complimented with concrete acts of mystical *experience*: "It is in studying in these great lives, [*and*] *in striving to experience sympathetically what they experience*, that we may penetrate by an act of intuition to the life principle itself."
[147] TSMR 237.
[148] TSMR 250.

quality, content, and sense of mystical experience is the intuitive capacity that human beings possess for removing themselves—even if only for a moment—from those social and intellectual imperatives within which they historically find themselves implicated.

Does this mean that Bergson is simply contradicting himself when he writes that "mysticism and religion are mutually cause and effect" of each other?[149] Not at all, but to see why this is not a contradiction, we must recognise that when Bergson speaks of a mutual relation of causation between mysticism and religious language, he does not take this relation to be one of strict *reciprocity*. Indeed, as Bergson reminds us in a passing discussion of William James' thought on mysticism, when we speak of mystical experience the notion of causation encompasses many different senses.[150] While that notion can refer to "the efficient and sufficient cause" of a given effect, it can also be understood, less strongly, as the "occasion" for an effect that might have developed out of its own tendency.[151] And when Bergson speaks of the relation between religious language and mysticism, he seems to be deploying both of these senses of causation. Indeed, it is clear from Bergson's account of this relation that mysticism 'causes' religion in the same way that the creative emotion causes intellectual representations. Here, mysticism, or rather mystical experience, is the 'efficient and sufficient cause' of religious representations: the former generates the latter. As Bergson writes, just like the creative emotion eventually crystallises into intellectual representations, so too, religious language is "the crystallisation, brought about by a scientific process of cooling, of what mysticism had poured, while hot, into the soul of

[149] TSMR 230, cf. 239. There is an ambiguity in the English translation of this phrase. The original French reads: "Mysticisme et christianisme se conditionnent donc l'un l'autre, indéfinitement." It is not altogether clear why the English translators opted for rendering this expression using the language of cause and effect, especially since elsewhere in the same chapter, the same expression ("se conditionnent l'un l'autre") is rendered as "condition one another." Yet, given that Bergson himself had an input into the English translation (to the point where some of the passages were, as the translators claim in their preface, "re-thought in English"), and given that the discussion on the relation between religious language and mysticism draws on many of the same metaphors that pervaded Bergson's description of the two types of emotion, it is possible that this alteration was directly suggested by Bergson himself. For this reason, I here continue to use the expression as it appears in the English translation. Audra and Brereton, 1977: 5-6.

[150] TSRM 218; cf. James, 1982: 294-332.

[151] TSMR 218.

man."[152] But while the fierce glow of mysticism generates the linguistic crystallisations of religion, *those crystals are not themselves generative of the fiery emotion whence they derived*. As we saw Bergson note, the difference between the creative emotion and intellectual representations is that of what "generates and that which is generated."[153] This entails that when Bergson speaks of religion 'causing' mysticism, we should understand this relation in terms of the second, or weaker, sense of causation that Bergson finds in James. In this sense, what religious language 'causes' in mysticism is merely the "occasion" for it to make a wider appearance in the world.[154] Religious expression provides mysticism with the *opportunity* to make itself felt more widely across humanity.[155] But the language of religion is not, by itself, the '*effective and sufficient'* cause of mystical emotion: that stronger cause continues to have its source in the fundamental experience that "mysticism unalloyed [*à l'état pur*], apart from [*dégagé*] the visions, the allegories, the theological language which express it" is capable of reaching in the mystical intuition.[156] Hence, we might say that though religious language 'causes' mysticism to become "capable of marching onto the conquest of the world", the essential quality of mystical experience continues to be derived from the attention that it turns towards the heavens.[157] The truth of mystical experience continues to be derived from the immediate contact that it establishes with the divine force that the *élan vital* expresses in isolation from its terrestrial manifestations.[158]

If Bergson's thought on the relation between religious language and mystical experience continues to be premised on the purity of mystical experience, can the same be said of mysticism's relation to mechanism? As I previously indicated, here things are less clear, for Bergson does claim that the advent of machines ensured the deliverance of mysticism in an

[152] TSRM 238.
[153] TSMR 44.
[154] "If a word of a great mystic, or some one of his imitators, finds an echo in one or another of us, may it not be that there is a mystic dormant within us, merely waiting for an occasion to awake?" TSRM 100.
[155] "What the mystic finds waiting for him [through the linguistic work of religion], then, is a humanity which has been prepared to listen to his message". TSMR 239.
[156] TSMR 250.
[157] TSMR 240.
[158] TSMR 235.

"entirely new sense."[159] But if mechanism is capable of bringing this change about, what central obstacle to mysticism does it, in turn, overcome? As mentioned, for Bergson, this obstacle is essentially related to humanity's embodiment. Though humanity, as an animal species, is both "intelligent and free", it must nonetheless feed itself in order to survive.[160] The issue that has emerged for humanity historically, however, is that even its most essential needs have seldom been fulfilled within the domain of closed societies: "Millions of men never get enough to eat. There are some who starve to death."[161] In part, this issue is a function of the natural tendency towards closure and *self*-preservation that defines closed societies. Those societies tend to cater only for basic needs of their own population, and they often neglect to economically interact with other societies even where this activity might prove beneficial for all.[162] According to Bergson, this is how the persistence of war across human history is to be explained.[163] The incapacity of closed societies to cater for more than their own self-interest "means war."[164] Under these conditions, it is unsurprising that individuals have generally failed to feel themselves drawn towards the aspiration of a love for all humanity. Because closed societies have historically failed to attain a sovereignty over things, the history of humanity has not only been dominated by material misery, but it has also resulted in a resulted in a displacement of humanity's natural freedom in favour of a sovereignty of man over man.[165]

On Bergson's reading, the advent of machines introduces the opportunity for an overcoming of these issues that have historically plagued humanity. As he writes,

> machines which run on oil or coal or 'white coal', and which convert into motion a potential energy stored up for millions of years, have actually imparted to our organism an extension so vast, have endowed it with a power so mighty, so out of proportion to the size and strength of that organism,

[159] TSMR 226.
[160] TSMR 278; MM 198.
[161] TSMR 305.
[162] TSMR 288-289.
[163] On Bergson's philosophy of war, see: Soulez, 2012: 99-125.
[164] TSMR 289.
[165] TSMR 311.

> that surely none of all this was foreseen in this structural plan of our species: he was a unique stroke of luck, the greatest material success of man on the planet.[166]

The invention of machines—specifically, industrialised machines—has enabled humanity to potentially relate to its material conditions in a radically different way. With the creation of agricultural implements that radically increase the yield of the earth's soil, machines have provided humanity with the potential to greatly develop its means of satisfying real needs.[167] Machines have provided humanity with the chance to liberate itself from its state of misery and helplessness. Thus, machines have also created the potentiality for the impetus that guides mysticism to no longer be "thwarted by material conditions".[168] Unlike the ancient Indian mystic who felt, through famine and starvation, that he was "crushed by nature", the modern soul has at its disposal the potential to liberate itself from its material constraints.[169] It has the opportunity of no longer focusing its undivided attention on the earth with a view to fulfilling its basic material needs. Humanity is thus presented with the opportunity to turn its attention towards the heavens and to thereby achieve a vision of itself that is no longer simply determined in function of the natural impulses of closed societies. With machines, "the soul could open wide its gates to a universal love."[170] And it is in this sense that we should understand Bergson's famous claim that "the mystical summons up [*appelle*] the mechanical."[171] What mysticism requires in order to "radiate" and "spread" itself across humanity is a historically determined state of affairs ensuring that humanity is no longer crushed by its material constraints.[172] As Bergson neatly summarises it, "mysticism cannot be disseminated without encouraging a very special 'will to power.' This will be a dominance not over men, but over things, precisely in order that man shall no longer have so much

[166] TSMR 309; cf. CE 138-139.
[167] TSMR 307.
[168] TSMR 227.
[169] TSMR 226.
[170] TSMR 227.
[171] TSMR 309.
[172] TSMR 309.

dominance over man."[173]

Once again, however, Bergson recognises that in reality things are not so simple. For if the advances of mechanism have created the *potential* for a liberation of humanity from its material needs, it is also the case that, *historically*, this potential has not always been actualised. As Bergson remarks, one of the issues with increasing mechanisation is that it has "created a mass of new needs; [but] it has not taken the trouble to ensure for the majority of men, for all if that were possible, the satisfaction of old needs."[174] Historically, mechanism has most often been deployed in closed societies as a way of fulfilling humanity's desire for the superfluous and inessential, that is, for comfort and luxuries. It has also been profoundly aligned with interests of war and imperialism, as Bergson repeatedly noted in his speeches during the First World War.[175] But it has not generally improved humanity's lot with regards to its most essential needs. Yet, as Bergson maintains, we should not see these issues as forming part of mechanism's "essence."[176] Although it is true that mechanism has historically tended to produce effects that are contrary to the flourishing of humanity, these are at worst only the expression of one of the tendencies that mechanism can follow.[177] This entails that those negative effects, insofar as they actually exist, "can all be corrected, and then the machine would be nothing but a great benefactor."[178] That is, mechanism can still play the function that mysticism calls upon it to perform; it can still liberate humanity from its material constraints and thus enable it to open itself to the temporal force of the *élan vital*. But for mechanism to play this role, Bergson insists, we

[173] TSMR 311 (translation modified). There seems to be an implicit reference to Nietzsche in this passage. For more on Bergson and Nietzsche, see: Lawlor, 2003: 85-111; Ansell-Pearson and Uperth, 2012: 246-264.
[174] TSMR 306.
[175] As Bergson (1972: 1115-1116) declares in a 1914 speech, for example: "Administrative and military mechanism only had to await the appearance of industrial mechanism to combine themselves with it. Once this combination was made, a formidable [war] machine would rise up." cf. TSMR 288, 291.
[176] TSMR 309.
[177] As Suzanne Guerlac (2012: 52) puts it: "Bergson does not object to technology but to the ends it serves in the context of (closed) industrial societies."
[178] TSMR 307.

cannot rely on the unconscious forces of history.[179] What is needed instead is *conscious human initiative*.[180] "What we need are new reserves of potential energy—moral energy this time."[181] It is only when this moral energy is used to guide and regulate the impulses of mechanism that the latter can begin to play an effective function in spreading and radiating mysticism across humanity.

Whence does this moral energy derive? Does it arise from politically determined states of affairs, from the same affairs that have historically sustained the negative effects of mechanism, or does it, indeed, emerge from elsewhere? In the final pages of *The Two Sources*, Bergson leaves us with no doubt with regard to this question: "Let but a mystic genius appear, he will draw after him a humanity already vastly grown in the body, and whose soul he has transfigured. He will yearn to make of it a new species, or rather deliver it from the necessity of being a species".[182] In other words, it is *through* the activity of the mystical soul that the occasion or opportunity that is afforded by mechanism can become a reality for humanity at large.[183] Indeed, as Bergson famously puts it, "mechanism demands [*exigerait*] mysticism."[184] This means that if mechanism is finally capable of liberating humanity from its material necessity, if its opportunity is finally capable of becoming a reality for all, this is only insofar as the sense for that opportunity is determined by the mystical soul's experience of the *élan vital*. Without that experience, without the guidance and direction that is provided by the mystical soul's intuitive activity, mechanism would perhaps never expand beyond its dominant historical function as an instrument for the production of luxuries and war. By contrast, when its sense is provided by the mystical intuition, mechanism can find its "true vocation again"; it can become a great benefactor for the whole of humanity.[185] It can become the material "support [*point d'appui*]" by which humanity at

[179] "We do not believe in the unconscious in history". TSMR 308.
[180] TSMR 307.
[181] TSMR 310.
[182] TSMR 311.
[183] cf. TSMR 58.
[184] TSMR 310 (translation modified).
[185] TSMR 310.

large begins to rise above earthly matters to experience for itself the temporal force of the new.[186]

But if this "alliance" that Bergson envisions between mechanism and mysticism enables the former to acquire a new sense on the basis of the latter's activity, is the inverse also true?[187] Does mystical experience itself now become redefined in terms of its *constitutive* relation to the mechanical? This is the crucial question that Bergson's analysis of the relation between mysticism and mechanism never explicitly clarifies. For if Bergson suggests that humanity can succeed in looking heavenwards only "through [*par*]" mechanism, it is less clear whether he also believes that this passage changes anything about the essential quality of mystical experience.[188] Of what would this change consist? Well, given that Bergson strongly equates mechanism with the order of history, and in particular with the negative effects that it has historically tended to produce, then perhaps this change might consist of a certain *historicisation* of mystical experience. Put differently, if mystical experience were to veritably start passing through a system of machines that themselves have a particular history, then perhaps its essential quality would now also become modified in accordance with the implicit tendencies of the technological history to which those machines belong. Perhaps, through this passage, the activity of mystical experience would now become more susceptible to encouraging not only the opportunities but also the *risks* and *dangers* that mechanism has manifested historically, that is, the production of luxuries, war and imperialism.[189]

Yet, it is precisely this possibility that Bergson denies at the end of *The Two Sources*. In a brief but nonetheless significant response to Ernst Seillière, Bergson argues that true

[186] TSMR 309.
[187] Worms, 2012: 29.
[188] TSMR 310.
[189] cf. TSMR 235-236. To be sure, as we have seen, Bergson does not take these negative effects to pertain to the *essence* of mechanism. But while they are not essential to mechanism, they are nonetheless the expression of one of the poles towards which mechanism can *tend*. And this tendency, like all Bergsonian tendencies, is not simply abolished because another, contrary to it, has intervened. Thus, even if machines are provided their "true vocation" by mystical experience, their 'false vocation' nonetheless inheres in them as a virtual tendency.

mysticism is incompatible with imperialism.[190] To clarify, Bergson is here replying to Seillière's concern that any moral doctrine that premises itself too strongly on mystical as opposed to rational impulses carries with it "the risk of abuse by an 'excessive will to power.'"[191] In short, Seillière worries that mysticism can lead to imperialism. In response to this, Bergson contends that mystical experience can lead to imperialism *only* if it becomes "garbed" in the language and images of static religion and nationalism.[192] Only when it is counterfeited or distorted in the symbolism of closed societies can mysticism become imperialism. "So that if we keep to true mysticism, we shall judge it incompatible with imperialism."[193] But if in its alliance with mechanism mysticism passes *through* machines that have themselves historically tended towards the promotion of imperialist ends, how can it *immunise* itself from those negative tendencies? How can mystical experience shelter itself from the risks and dangers that its alliance with mechanism presents? Once again, it seems that for Bergson mystical experience can shelter itself from the worst excesses of mechanism only because *its essential quality remains irreducible to the historical dimensions of the latter*. Thus, even if in allying itself with mechanism mystical experience now begins to pass 'through' a set of historical machines, its fundamental sense is in no way altered by that act of passage. So long as it does not become garbed in the language and symbolism of closed societies, true mysticism carries no danger of falling into the excesses that mechanism has historically manifested.

In this sense, if there is an alliance between mechanism and mysticism, this alliance is, much like the alliance between mysticism and religious language, composed of two *unequal* partners. Just like the fundamental sense of mystical experience is not shaped by the transmission that it receives in religious language, so too, there is no mystical experience that is fundamentally shaped by the socio-historical impulses of the mechanism that helps to

[190] TSMR 311.
[191] For more on the relation between Bergson and Seillière, see: Sinclair, 2020: 244-251; Seillière, 1917: 34-50.
[192] TSMR 311.
[193] TSMR 311.

diffuse it. True, the success of mysticism in spreading itself across humanity is still determined by the relation that it assumes to mechanism: "mysticism cannot be disseminated without encouraging a very special 'will to power.'" But the goal of mystical experience, its essential quality or sense as a contact with the *élan vital*, is by no means mediated mechanically. Just like there is no *linguistic* experience of the *élan vital*, so too, there is no *machinic* mystical experience for Bergson. In both cases, the intuitive activity of the mystical soul remains irreducible to, and purified of, those social or historical impulses that help spread it across humanity as a whole and with which it is inevitably led to interact. The 'truth' of true mysticism is never derived or determined politically or *historically*. In the final analysis, the truth of mystical experience is always determined as a function of the unalloyed contact that it establishes with the *élan vital*. The relation that mystical experience establishes with the temporality of the new always finds its fundamental sense beyond the manifestations of history and politics. It always derives its essential sense from *elsewhere*.

2.4. Conclusion: beyond Bergson

I have argued in this chapter that despite appearances *The Two Sources* does not in fact develop a thoroughly historicised conception of temporal ethics. True, many of Bergson's assertions—particularly those on mechanism—can be seen as *tending* in that direction. Nevertheless, as I demonstrated above, in continuing to premise the purity and immediacy of intuition against those historical forces that nonetheless supplement the diffusion and expansion of mysticism, *The Two Sources* cannot*, pace* Worms, be said to concretise a model of temporal ethics that does not abandon "the field of human history for that of a transcendent metaphysics."[194] As Merleau-Ponty pithily summarises the issue, in *The Two Sources*, "man's relation to [a] Super-nature is still the direct relationship the previous books found between the intuition and natural being."[195] Indeed, like the metaphysical intuition, the

[194] Worms, 2004: 86.
[195] Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 189.

mystical intuition of *The Two Sources* continues to find its essential sense and vitality from a source that is 'beyond' or 'elsewhere' than the historical manifestations of society. In the final analysis, therefore, that text's model of temporal ethics remains ahistorical.[196] What Bergson does not arrive at is the recognition that—*as* involved with determined historical forces—the intuition, and the ethical relation to time it generates, always finds itself *constitutively* affected by history.

In this particular sense, I contend, *The Two Sources* also fails to provide an adequate resolution to the problem of history that emerges in Bergson's metaphysical writings. Indeed, because Bergson does not ultimately accept that the intuition finds itself constitutively affected by historical phenomena, he also fails to contend with the fact that the intuition—*as so affected*—may tend itself towards the replication or reification of some of the violent tendencies that form part of its surrounding domain of actuality. This failure is clearly reflected in Bergson's insistence that true mysticism is incompatible with imperialism, when it is precisely that compatibility that would (for better or for worse) be otherwise necessitated by mysticism's constitutive involvement with the historical. Had Bergson recognised this constitutive involvement, he might have advocated a strategy for negotiating these dangers. But it is precisely this task that *The Two Sources* neglects.

None of which is to suggest that the problem of history remains unresolvable. Its resolution does, however, require more than Bergson's philosophy is capable of offering. This is why I want to spend the rest of this thesis going beyond Bergson, assessing specifically whether Levinas and Deleuze's own models of temporal ethics provide a more fitting resolution to this problem that initially suggests itself in Bergson's writings. As I suggested in the introduction to this thesis, the respective solutions provided by Levinas and the solo Deleuze differ in kind from the one we have just considered in relation to *The Two Sources*. Indeed, far from framing temporal ethics as potentially historical, both authors argue that an ethical relation to time must be immediate and, as such, must also differentiate

[196] Perhaps this also suggests, as Lawlor (2003: xii) writes, that "we have to characterise Bergson as a philosopher of transcendence rather than a philosopher of immanence."

itself from *any* empirical or historical content.[197] The question before us in the next three chapters of this thesis is whether Levinas and the solo Deleuze are indeed capable of divorcing their temporal ethics from all sense of the historical—or indeed, whether in failing to do so, they merely repeat and extend the problem of history that inheres in Bergson's writings.

[197] As chapter six will show, Deleuze and Guattari's work in *A Thousand Plateaus* takes a different path by accepting the constitutive role of history for temporal ethics. In this sense, I will argue there, that text also concretises the resolution to the problem of history that is signaled—though never delivered—by *The Two Sources*. For more on the relation between these texts, see also: Baugh, 2016: 352-366; Power, 2012: 192n.

3. Levinas I: the temporal ethics of alterity in *Totality and Infinity*

Having considered how the problem of history manifests itself in Bergson's philosophy, in this chapter I want to begin to turn my attention to Levinas to consider to what extent his own conception of temporal ethics offers a successful resolution to that problem. As I suggested in the introduction to this thesis, Levinas' ethical philosophy potentially offers a resolution to the quandaries of Bergsonism because it insists that temporal ethics *can* take place entirely "beyond history".[1] For Levinas, the possibility of entering an ethical relation to time that is not implicated in history remains a live one. But for this relation to the novelty of time to be truly thought and given, we cannot content ourselves (*pace* Bergson) with valorising the intuitive *praxis* by which a lone subject establishes a contact or communion with a differential temporality. To think an ethical relation to time that effectively goes beyond history, Levinas argues, we must move past Bergson's philosophy and recognise that far from being intuitive, that ethical relation can only consist of the metaphysical or social relation between the subject (or the I, *Moi*) and the Other (*Autrui*). For Levinas, only this exposure to the Other—or, more accurately, only this exposure to the infinity that is expressed by the linguistic dimension of the Other's face—can provide the subject with an *immediate* relation to time that is not contaminated or limited by history.[2]

If one follows Levinas on these points, then perhaps his ethics provides a fruitful route out of the problems of Bergsonism. Indeed, if Levinas is correct in saying that the linguistic relation to the Other truly bypasses history, then perhaps resolving the Bergsonian problem of history simply involves giving more attention to what Levinas calls the metaphysical relation with the Other. Of course, all this hinges on Levinas being justified in making these claims. However, as I argue in this chapter, there is good reason to doubt that Levinas' proposed ethical relation with the Other truly effects a clean rupture with the historical.

Focusing on Levinas' overall description of this relation in *Totality and Infinity*, in this

[1] TI 22.
[2] TI 52.

chapter I want to argue that his conception of temporal ethics remains more implicated with the order of history than he would perhaps like to admit. In *Totality and Infinity*, as section one of this chapter will show, Levinas describes the metaphysical relation to the Other as the most quintessential or "absolute experience" that the subject can have of the novelty of time: "The absolutely new is the Other."[3] In line with his broadly phenomenological approach, Levinas also argues that though this experience is absolute for the subject, it nonetheless finds (like all experience) its condition of possibility (or grounding) in certain ontological structures.[4] Namely, Levinas argues that for this experience of time to be given to the subject, that subject must not only be ontologically individuated as an I, but must also find itself constituted by an ontological condition that effectively *predisposes* it to respond to the time of the Other. As I seek to show in section two, these ontological conditions, which Levinas respectively calls interiority and fecundity, are what effectively *ground* the ethical relation to an infinite time that he seeks to describe; without them, Levinas claims, "the time (…) behind visible history would be impossible."[5]

Taking up and extending Derrida's famous reading of *Totality and Infinity* in "Violence and Metaphysics", in this chapter's third section I argue that the problem of history reinscribes itself in Levinas' temporal ethics at the level of the second of these conditions: fecundity. As we will see in what follows, Levinas frames this condition in terms of paternity, that is, in terms of the *familial* relation that emerges between a father and his son. It is this familial relation with the child, Levinas argues, that "establishes relationship with the absolute future, or infinite time."[6] However, I contend in section three that if Levinas wants to base his conception of temporal ethics on this familial relation, then his ethics is not as removed from history as he would have us believe. For the family is nothing more than a *historically* defined complex. In this precise sense, I contend, Derrida is correct to insist that

[3] TI 219.
[4] In the Preface to his text, Levinas admits that "the presentation and development of the notions [he employs] owe everything to the phenomenological method" (TI 28). For more on *Totality and Infinity*'s phenomenological method, see: Large, 2015: 4-10.
[5] TI 247.
[6] TI 268.

Levinas' temporal ethics in *Totality and Infinity* remains involved with the order of history. However, unlike Derrida, I do not see this involvement as being caused *only* by Levinas' conception of language. On my reading, Levinas' conception of temporal ethics in *Totality and Infinity* remains implicated with history in part precisely because it continues to base itself on what can only be seen as a concrete historical situation: the family.

3.1. Time and the Other

In the writings that precede the publication of *Totality and Infinity*, one of the major criticisms that Levinas levels at the history of philosophy concerns its inability to adequately think time. According to this early Levinas, traditional philosophy has "remained with the conception of a time taken to be purely exterior to the subject, a time-object, or taken to be entirely contained in the subject."[7] This inadequate conception of time clearly emerges in Heidegger's analyses of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*.[8] As Levinas writes in *Time and the Other*: "All the analyses of *Being and Time* are worked out either for the sake of the impersonality of everyday life or for the sake of solitary *Dasein*."[9] But what Heidegger's analyses miss in taking this solitary approach is the fact that time is never "the achievement of an isolated and lone subject."[10] Indeed, for Levinas, these analyses fail precisely to explain how a subject who remains riveted to itself, and who "discloses to *itself* its own authentic Being", is capable of receiving the novelty of time without simultaneously

[7] EE 94.
[8] Unfortunately, for reasons of space, I cannot here hope to convey much of a picture of Heidegger's immense influence on *Totality and Infinity* (on this, see: Mensch, 2015), nor can I comment at length on the (in)accuracy of Levinas' various critiques of the former. Suffice it to say that that Levinas directs much of his ethical focus in *Totality and Infinity* to Heidegger's (1993a: 238) basic claim that "the thinking that thinks into the truth of Being is, as thinking, historical." For Levinas, to think the "totalisation of history [as] (...) the ultimate schema of being" is already to reduce the alterity of the Other to the *visibility* and *cruelty* of the Same (TI 55, cf. 243). But there is perhaps also good reason to doubt that Heidegger's conception of Being *qua* historical straightforwardly lends itself to a visibility of and cruelty towards the "unrecognisable" (see, for example: Heidegger, 1993a: 263-265). For an excellent essay on Levinas' and Heidegger's respective notions of history, see: Nelson, 2014: 51-72.
[9] TO 40. Even Heidegger's concept of *Miteinandersein* is said to fall prey to this issue: "in Heidegger, sociality is completely found in the solitary subject." EE 94-95; cf. TI 67-68.
[10] TO 39.

collapsing that novelty into the framework of the same.[11] What this approach fails to grasp is the fact that "the absolute alterity of another instant cannot be found in the subject, who is absolutely *himself*."[12] The irreducible alterity of time "is an original form of exteriority that takes us beyond the categories of unity and multiplicity which are valid for things, that is, are valid in the world of an isolated subject, a solitary mind."[13] Yet, it is just this temporal irreducibility that Heidegger continually fails to thematise.

The early Levinas develops a similar criticism of Bergson. Indeed, if, as we saw in the first chapter, Levinas continues throughout his career to insist on the importance of the novelty-oriented aspects of Bergsonian duration, in his early writings he criticises Bergson for also falling short of going beyond the perspective of the lone subject. It must be asserted, Levinas holds, that "the Bergsonian conception of freedom through duration tends toward" an understanding of time as absolutely other and new.[14] Bergson recognises that "time adds something new to being, something absolutely new."[15] However, two basic problems remain. First, Bergson's conception of duration, with its emphasis on *continuity*, continues to posit the future as something that can be "grasped [*saisi*]" by a form of subjective "anticipation" or "projection".[16] But for Levinas, this notion overlooks the fact that in order to retain its status *as* absolute novelty, the future cannot be given as that which is *capable* of being grasped by means of subjective activity: "the future is what is not grasped, what befalls and lays hold of us."[17] For the future to be given as absolute novelty, there must be "a rupture of [the] continuity" that a subjective practice can establish with time.[18] However, it is precisely this rupture that Bergson remains in the first instance incapable of thinking.[19] Secondly, and

[11] This disclosure of itself to *itself* is how Heidegger (1962: 167, emphasis added, cf. 171, 214) describes the ontological clearing that is effected by *Dasein*: "If Dasein (…) discloses to *itself* its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the 'world' and this disclosure of Dasein are always accomplished as a clearing-away of concealments and obscurities."
[12] EE 93.
[13] EE 95.
[14] TO 80.
[15] TI 283; 218.
[16] TI TO 76.
[17] TO 76-77.
[18] TI 284.
[19] Levinas' critique of Bergson here resembles Gaston Bachelard's (2000: 24), who argues that in

relatedly, Levinas contends that Bergson's philosophy fails to think time beyond the restricted perspective of the isolated subject. While, as the first chapter noted, Bergson certainly affirms the existence of *other* durations, those durations nevertheless remain "in a certain sense *interior* to us."[20] Once again, however, this conception remains deficient.[21] What Bergson cannot admit is that if there are other durations, "the subject's identity by itself is incapable of yielding [*donner*] this."[22] Indeed, it seems to Levinas "impossible to speak of time in a subject alone, or to speak of a purely personal duration", as Bergson tends to do.[23] To approach the novelty of time, we must therefore move beyond Bergson's metaphysical category of duration and the essentially subjective perspective it implies. We have to think time not on the basis of the "work" that a subject *does* in relation to it, but rather in terms of "an opening [*ouverture*] onto a mystery" that is always already presupposed by any such subjective activity.[24]

This opening onto the absolutely new must be thought in terms of what Levinas calls the social relation. As *Existence and Existents* rhetorically affirms, *pace* Bergson's equation of the social with intellectual representation: "Is not sociality something more than the source of our representation of time: is it not time itself?"[25] Against Bergson, we have to recognise that the social relation does not have a merely "sociological" or "anthropological" import: "It is not a matter of saying how time is chopped up and parcelled out thanks to the notions we derive from society how society allows us to make a representation of time."[26] This is not to suggest that this social relation should be understood in terms of the community or commonality that emerges between two beings in relation to a third term.[27] Indeed, as Levinas confirms, the

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"Bergsonism the creative value of becoming is limited by the very fact of continuity."

[20] CM 155 (emphasis added).

[21] As if to avert a possible retort from the perspective of Bergson's concept of sympathy, Levinas writes that a relation to other durations cannot be a "sympathy through which we put ourselves in the other's place." TO 75.

[22] TO 81; EE 94.

[23] TO 77.

[24] TO 80-81.

[25] EE 93.

[26] TO 39.

[27] *Totality and Infinity* does not oppose itself to *all* concepts of commonality, since it continues to value the "commonness [*communauté*] of a father" in fecundity (TI 214). For more on these points, see:

social relation that he envisages is not "set up around a third term which serves as intermediary, which supplies what is common in the communion."[28] Such communion across a third term inevitably collapses the irreducibility of the temporal opening that Levinas seeks: it establishes the social relation as the "reciprocal relationship of two interchangeable terms."[29] To take shape *as* a temporal opening onto the absolutely new, this social relation must therefore be configured as an *asymmetry* and *lack of reciprocity* that contrasts strongly with any possible "contemporaneousness" between the beings in relation.[30] Far from being reducible to the status of "just another relation, one that can be produced in being", this relation must be treated as being's "ultimate event."[31]

Totality and Infinity begins to take these early observations further by casting the social relation as the *metaphysical* relation between the I (*Moi*) and the Other (*Autrui*).[32] As Levinas describes it, his text aims to describe "a relationship with the other that does not result in a divine or human totality, that is not the totalisation of history but the idea of infinity. Such a relationship is metaphysics itself."[33] Unlike Bergson's conception of that enterprise, however, this metaphysics does not take shape as the progressive aggregate of intuitive knowledge that the I can achieve of the temporality of the Other.[34] Indeed, as Levinas argues, in order to retain its status as an opening onto temporal novelty, this metaphysical relation cannot be configured as knowledge, for knowledge signifies "a way of approaching the known being such that its alterity with regard to the knowing being vanishes."[35] In metaphysics, the I is "in

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Blanchot, 1988: esp. 40-43; Lingis, 1994: passim.

[28] EE 94.

[29] EE 95.

[30] EE 96; TO 83-84; cf. TI 215-216.

[31] TI 221.

[32] "Metaphysics approaches without touching. Its *way* is not an action, but is the social relation." TI 109.

[33] TI 52.

[34] At several points in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas is critical of intuition as a means for achieving an exposure to the radical temporality of the Other. In a particularly stark formulation, Levinas writes: "Intuition (…) since it is vision (….) simply ensures the condition for the lateral signification of things within the same." TI 191, cf. 66, 211, 297.

Levinas likely has *both* Bergson *and* Husserl in mind with these criticisms. For if, as noted in chapter one, vision remains Bergson's central metaphor for intuition, the same can be said of Husserl, as Levinas insists in *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology.* cf. Levinas, 1995: 89-90; Husserl, 1983: 326-331.

[35] TI 42.

relation with what it cannot absorb, with what it cannot, in the etymological sense of the term, comprehend."[36] Instead, this metaphysical relation must be taken as a "desire [that] tends towards *something else entirely*, toward the *absolutely other* [*absolument autre*]."[37] This desire is not a yearning for a lost essence or being, since it "desires beyond everything that can simply complete it." [38] The metaphysical relation is rather a desire for what the I cannot ever hope to encompass or capture within its own subjective coordinates: "Desire is desire for the absolutely other."[39] And for Levinas, this desire must be conceived in terms of the I's exposure to the absolute strangeness of the Other *human* person. "The absolutely other [*Autre*] is the Other [*Autrui*]. He and I do not form a number. (….) Neither possession nor the unity of number nor the unity of concepts link me to the Stranger, the Stranger who disturbs being at home with oneself. (….) Over him I have no power. He escapes my grasp by an essential dimension".[40] Metaphysical desire, or the social relation, is the "epiphany" of the absolutely new that is produced in the I by means of the strangeness and destituteness that the Other's human alterity expresses.[41]

For Levinas, this metaphysical relation between the I and the Other is ethical.[42] "The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics."[43] This does not indicate that the metaphysical relation takes shape as a *morality*, that is, as "a series of rules relating to social behaviour and civic duty."[44] Ethics refers instead to "the extreme

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[36] TI 80.
[37] TI 33.
[38] TI 34.
[39] TI 34.
[40] TI 39. Deleuze reverses this relation between the other [*Autre*] and Other [*Autrui*] in both *Difference and Repetition* (DR 260-261, 281-282) and in his 1967 essay on Michel Tournier (LS 301-321), arguing in both texts that the structure-Other (*Autrui*) needs to be surmounted in favour of an "otherwise-Other [*l'autre qu'autrui*]" (LS 319). For a comparative study of Deleuze and Levinas' respective conceptions of the Other, see my: Ventura, 2020.
[41] TI 75.
[42] "Metaphysics is enacted in ethical relations." TI 79.
[43] TI 43.
[44] In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas deploys the terms ethics (*èthique*) and morality (*morale*) interchangeably, opposing the two terms not to each other, but to the political States, laws and institutions that operate *in* history: "Morality will oppose politics in history." TI 22.
For Levinas' later distinction between ethics and morality, see: Levinas and Kearney, 1986: 29-30.

exposure and sensitivity of one subjectivity to another".[45] It refers to the unpredictable and unforeseeable "teaching" that the I receives from the Other—a teaching that is irreducible to Socratic maieutics in that it "comes from the exterior" and brings the I more than it can contain in itself.[46] Further distinguishing this relation as ethical is the fact that it does not take place at the level of ontology. As Levinas famously states, "metaphysics precedes ontology [*la métaphysique précède l'ontologie*]."[47] This means that the ethical teaching the I receives from the Other does not concern the latter's existence as merely an existent *within* Being. To receive from the Other only in function of their insertion in a wider, impersonal Being is to unduly determine the content of their ethical teaching; "it is to subordinate the relation with *someone*, who is an existent (the ethical relation), to a relation with the *Being of existents*, which, impersonal, permits the apprehension, the domination of existents (a relationship of knowing)".[48] As ethical, the metaphysical relation between the I and the Other is thus not accomplished through a third, neutral term (Being) which would unite the two beings in relation.[49] Indeed, that relation is ethical in the precise sense that it *precedes* the shared immersion of the I and the Other in Being. Ethics also precedes ontology in that the Other *already* 'speaks' before the I can even begin to comprehend the Being which the Other, as an existent, *is*.[50] In Levinas' summary: "this relationship with the Other as interlocutor, this relation with an *existent*—precedes all ontology; it is the ultimate relation in Being. Ontology presupposes metaphysics."[51]

To say that ethics precedes ontology is not to say that ethics is never enacted *in* being. But for Levinas, this enactment takes on a very precise shape: "Such a situation is the gleam

[45] Levinas and Kearney, 1986: 29.
[46] TI 51.
[47] TI 43. On the primacy of ethics over ontology, see also Levinas' 1951 essay "Is Ontology Fundamental?": Levinas, 1996b: 1-11.
[48] TI 45. The emphasis on domination in this passage is indicative of one of Levinas' central claims regarding ontology and its associated modalities of vision and knowledge, namely, that they do *violence* to the alterity of the Other. cf. TI 21-30, 46-48, 222-240; Levinas, 1987a: 17-21.
[49] TI 44.
[50] TI 47.
[51] TI 48.

of exteriority or of transcendence in the face [*visage*] of the Other."[52] In other words, the exposure of the I to the Other's irreducible temporality is always configured in terms of its relation to the Other's face: "The way in which the other presents himself, exceeding *the idea of the other in me*, we here name face."[53] Now, although the term face (*vis-age*) might appear to indicate the modality of vision, Levinas explicitly warns us against such an interpretation. Vision always presupposes the insertion of the related beings into a "space" and a "light" that equalises or reduces their fundamental alterity.[54] "Light is that through which something is other than myself, but already as if it came from me."[55] Equally, "[s]pace, instead of transporting beyond, simply ensures the condition for the later signification of things within the same."[56] Thus, for Levinas, the fundamental locus of the face is not that of vision: "Vision is not a transcendence. (….) It opens nothing that, beyond the same would be absolutely other, that is, in itself."[57] Instead, Levinas argues, the face must be taken as being essentially related to *language*: "The 'vision' of the face is inseparable from [the] offering [that] language is."[58] The work of language is entirely different from that of vision: "it consists in entering into a relationship (…) having meaning by itself, *καθ'αυτο*, signifying before we have projected light upon it", or before its immersion in an empty space.[59] Indeed, in language, terms become related not on the basis of the neutral ontological medium that unites or subtends them, but in terms of their transcendence or irreducibility to one another.[60] "In other words, language is spoken where community between the terms of the relationship is wanting, where the common plane is wanting or is yet to be constituted."[61] And this explains why the face's essential domain is that of language, or discourse. "The

[52] TI 24.
[53] TI 50.
[54] For more on Levinas' critique of thought as light, see also: EE 46-41; TO 64-66.
[55] TO 64.
[56] TI 191.
[57] TI 191.
[58] TI 174.
[59] TI 74. To those, like Bergson, who would claim that language only *mediates* a relation to time on the basis of social categories and meanings, Levinas responds: "it is not the mediation of the sign that forms signification, but signification (whose primordial event is the face to face) that makes the sign function possible." TI 206.
[60] cf. Levinas, 1996b: 7.
[61] TI 73.

face speaks."[62] And that is so because, unlike vision, language requires no homogeneous, spatial or illuminated milieu to serve as its condition of possibility.[63] Language operates entirely across alterity; it introduces "a dimension of transcendence, and leads to a relation totally different to experience in the sensible sense of the term."[64] To that extent, Levinas tells us, language can also "be defined as the very power to break the continuity of being or of history."[65] Language shatters the I's historical and ontological continuity with itself, and as such, introduces an irreducible temporality into the interiority of the I. Discourse with the Other "opens time."[66]

Language effects this opening not as communication but as *expression*.[67] Indeed, for Levinas, discourse is not principally defined by the possibility it creates in allowing beings to exchange information regarding their "interior and hidden world."[68] Such a communicative conception of language still presupposes the modality of manifestation; it still insists that language works to divulge a previously concealed substantiality. By contrast, a conception of language that prioritises expression recognises that language is not "analogous to the sensation presented to the eye."[69] It recognises that what expresses itself does so "contrary to all the conditions for the visibility of objects."[70] Expression, Levinas contends, is *καθ'αυτο*, that is, it proceeds "by itself and not by reference to a system" of luminosity and spatiality.[71] Through expression, then, the Other presents himself to the I as "starting from himself" and without reference to a third term that would neutralise that presentation.[72] Indeed, "the first content of expression is the expression itself", as opposed to the modification or

[62] TI 66. "The epiphany of the face is wholly language." Levinas, 1987c: 55.
[63] "Speech cuts across vision." TI 193.
[64] TI 193.
[65] TI 195.
[66] TI 225.
[67] For a comparative analysis of Deleuze and Levinas' conceptions of expression, see: Williams, 2005: 33-52.
[68] TI 200, cf. TI 202.
[69] TI 66.
[70] TI 65.
[71] TI 74-75.
[72] TI 67.

thematisation that might be imposed upon it after the fact.[73] This entails that when the Other faces the I, it does so *immediately*. There is no possible interposition of thematisation or abstraction in the face-to-face relation: "The immediate [*immédiat*] is the face to face."[74] As expression, the face is therefore the *immediate* imposition of alterity on the I: "it is preeminently the presence of [an] exteriority" that exceeds the interiority and sameness that the I, left to itself, cannot evade.[75] The face's expression opens the I to the Other's irreducible temporality, doing so immediately and without reference to a system that would only limit and dissimulate "the shock of the encounter of the same with the other."[76]

With this description of the face as language and expression, Levinas also begins to specify the nature of the temporality that is opened by the Other. As he writes: "To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, (…). It is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which means exactly: to have the idea of infinity."[77] This reference to infinity represents Levinas' laudatory engagement with Descartes, in whose third mediation Levinas finds a model for describing the teaching that is brought about by the Other.[78] According to Levinas, in this meditation Descartes describes an irreducible situation where the finite I thinks and receives an idea of infinity that *cannot*, properly speaking, ever proceed from itself alone.[79] "In thinking infinity the I from the first *thinks more than it thinks*."[80] In this situation, subjective thought finds itself *exceeded* via its relation with an infinite being that it cannot ever hope to grasp or contain: "[t]he idea of infinity, the overflowing of finite thought by its content, effectuates the relation of thought with what exceeds its capacity".[81] And for Levinas, we cannot overlook the ethical significance of

[73] TI 51.
[74] *Pace* Bergson's equation of immediacy with contact, Levinas argues: "The idea of contact does not represent the primordial mode of the immediate [*immédiat*]. Contact is already a thematisation and a reference to a horizon. The immediate [*immédiat*] is the face to face." TI 52.
[75] TI 66.
[76] TI 42.
[77] TI 51.
[78] On this topic, see also Levinas' 1957 essay on "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity": Levinas, 1987c: 47-59.
[79] cf. Descartes, 2003: 66-67.
[80] Levinas, 1987c: 54.
[81] TI 197.

this situation described by Descartes.[82] Alongside Plato's notion of a Good that stands wholly beyond being, Descartes' reflections on infinity constitute one of the rare glimpses of absolute alterity to be found in the history of philosophy.[83] "Descartes, better than an idealist or realist, discovers a relation with a total alterity irreducible to interiority".[84] On the basis of his meditation on infinity, Levinas argues, we can also begin to more precisely define the irreducible temporality that is introduced by the Other. We can specify that temporality as precisely *infinity*, that is, as the disruptive 'moment', which, always coming from beyond the power of the I, shatters and disrupts the continuity of any possible egological interiority.[85] We can define the Other's temporality as a "not yet" that, properly speaking, never arrives for the I because it always remains beyond its grasp as an ungraspable and unforeseeable moment of futurity.[86] It is this infinity, or futurity, that the I receives from the Other and that it cannot ever hope to receive from itself: "through the face filters the obscure light coming from beyond the face from what is *not yet*, from a future never future enough, more remote than the possible."[87] Insofar as it expresses itself as infinitude, the face thus turns the I "into a being whose very existence consists in this incessant reception of teaching, in this incessant overflowing of self (which is time)."[88] In other words, the face, *qua* infinity, teaches the I the time of the absolutely new: "The introduction of the new into a thought, the idea of infinity, is the very work of [the face]. The absolutely new is the Other."[89]

As the expression of infinity, the face calls into question the primacy of the same and the present. It causes those two essentially subjective modalities to 'overflow' and 'surpass' themselves. But this surpassing and overflowing, Levinas warns, should not be understood in spatial terms: "This overflowing is to be distinguished from the image of a liquid

[82] What interests Levinas in Descartes' argument is not its attempt to demonstrate the existence of God, but its formal structure. cf. Levinas, 1987c: 53.
[83] TI 103-105. Levinas later adds Kant's conception of the primacy of practical reason to this list of exceptional moments in the history of philosophy: Levinas, 1998b: 119.
[84] TI 211.
[85] "It is not the finitude of being that constitutes the essence of time, as Heidegger thinks, but its infinity." TI 284.
[86] TI 282.
[87] TI 254-255.
[88] TI 204.
[89] TI 219.

overflowing a vessel, because this overflowing presence is effectuated as a position *in face of* the same."[90] Instead, the face's expressive overflowing should be understood as the *temporal surplus* or *excess* that the Other introduces into being, "*the surplus that is produced by the society of infinity*, an incessant surplus that accomplishes the infinitude of infinity."[91] As infinity, the face introduces the excessive temporality of the new into being. In this way, the face also obligates the I to contend with a time that is never its own. Indeed, for Levinas, by introducing the temporal dimension of infinity, the face also calls the I to *responsibility* and enjoins it to *respond* to a future temporality that is always beyond its reach: "the Other faces me and puts me in question and *obliges* me by his essence qua infinity."[92] In this sense, the face is not simply "the beginning of a true experience of the *new*."[93] As infinity, the face also in part determines the I to *respond* to the temporal novelty that is expressed by the Other: "in discourse I expose myself to the questioning of the Other, and this urgency of the response—acuteness of the present—engenders me for responsibility; as responsible I am brought to my final reality."[94]

The temporal infinity of which Levinas speaks is not a Hegelian infinity, whose nature is to actualise itself within history and to become present in the 'here and now.'[95] Indeed, for Levinas, to treat the infinite as Hegel does, that is, as "the term of a history", is to reduce the infinite's exteriority to the play of the same, to treat it only in function of its role within an impersonal totality.[96] The temporality of history, Levinas writes, "is set forth in the visible."[97] This means that the temporality that governs history is not that of infinity, but only a chronology that is "temporalised relative to a present situated in itself and identifiable".[98] Furthermore, in history, what counts is not "the position of the I before the other in which the

[90] TI 195-196.
[91] TI 218.
[92] TI 207.
[93] TI 50.
[94] TI 178.
[95] "In the free will, the truly infinite becomes actual and present; the free will itself is this Idea whose nature it is to be present here and now." Hegel, 2008: §22.
[96] For more on Levinas and Hegel's respective conceptions of history, see also: Schroeder, 1996: 46-79; Severson, 2013:154-157; Uljée, 2018: 221-235.
[97] TI 243.
[98] TI 247.

other remains transcendent", but only the *impersonality* of the works that individual subjects *produce*.[99] History primarily concerns itself with the economic *exchange* or *commerce* of these impersonal works.[100] But in this economic exchange, neither the singularity of the Other nor that of the I is taken into account; historically, each becomes "congealed into a personage interpreted on the basis of his work."[101] At its heart, therefore, history displays a certain "cruelty and injustice" with regard to the alterity of the Other—something that is clearly reflected in the fact history necessarily tends towards *war*.[102] "But across the gold that buys him or the steel that kills him the Other is not approached face to face".[103] That is, history can only lead to a *violent ignorance* of what is ethically significant in the Other's alterity. "Existence in history consists in placing my consciousness outside of me [into works] and in destroying my responsibility."[104] Hence, for Levinas, the time of infinity is never, properly speaking, reducible to the order of the historical. Indeed, to receive the teaching or the infinity that the Other's face expresses means precisely to go "*beyond the totality* or beyond history."[105] Because history cannot but reduce the alterity of the Other to the impersonality of their works, it also cannot operate as the site where the I truly receives the infinite time of the Other. "When man truly approaches the Other he is uprooted [*arraché*] from history."[106]

Levinas is clear that this uprootedness from history is by no means the result of a practice (intuitive or otherwise). Nevertheless, and in line with his broadly phenomenological method in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas contends that for I's exposure to the Other's alterity "to be realised, it is not enough that an infinite time be given."[107] Indeed, as an *experience* of the absolutely new—albeit an absolute experience—the I's exposure to infinity always finds

[99] TI 52.
[100] TI 226-232.
[101] TI 228.
[102] This is, as Derrida reads him, "the legitimate truism from which Levinas always draws inspiration—history is violence." VM 117.
[103] TI 228.
[104] TI 252.
[105] TI 22.
[106] TI 52.
[107] TI 247. I am here deploying a loose definition of phenomenology as a method that is interested in the transcendental conditions of experience.

its *condition of possibility* in certain structures. For a start, as Levinas repeatedly warns throughout *Totality and Infinity*, the I's exposure to the Other's infinity presupposes the *separation* between the two terms: "To have the idea of Infinity it is necessary to exist as separated."[108] This means that to fully explicate the ethical relation between the I and the Other, we cannot content ourselves with simply describing the 'effects' of the Other on the I. We also have to provide an account of how the I *itself* comes to be an I, doing so in recognition of the fact that for alterity to be produced in being "an I is needed", that "[a]lterity is possible only starting from me."[109] Additionally, or secondly, we also have to account for how that I, in the context of its own egological interiority, finds itself *predisposed* to respond to the Other.[110] The I's position as a responsible subject, Levinas cautions, "consists in being able to respond to this essential destitution of the Other".[111] However, as a separated being, the I is also capable of *irresponsibility*, that is, of "shutting itself up against the very appeal that has aroused it."[112] "Henceforth", Levinas tells us, "the independence of the I and its position before the absolutely other can figure in a history and a politics"—with the subsequent destruction of responsibility that this entails.[113] In the context of these specifications, Levinas' conception of temporal ethics will not be complete until he can also show *how the I's responsible openness to the Other is itself possible*. To show how the I can truly relate itself to infinity beyond history, Levinas' philosophy must also detail "the condition for both goodness and the transcendence of the face."[114]

As I read his text, Levinas provides an exposition of these two conditions, respectively, in Sections II and IV of *Totality and Infinity*. In Section II, entitled "Interiority and Economy", Levinas provides an ontological description of how the I comes to acquire its own inner temporality or interiority, with a view to then describing, in Section III, the rupture that is

[108] TI 79.
[109] TI 39-40, cf. 148.
[110] "Thus my unicity qua I contains both self-sufficiency of being and my partialness, my position before the other as a face." TI 214.
[111] TI 215.
[112] TI 216.
[113] TI 226.
[114] TI 247.

effected by the Other through the face. In Section IV, Levinas attempts to describe—by means of the ontological concepts of love and fecundity—the conditions in which "the phenomenon of the 'not yet' is rooted."[115] Without this ontological notion of fecundity, Levinas tells us, "the time necessary for the manifestation of truth behind visible history [that is, the time of infinity] would be impossible."[116] It is therefore to these two conditions that we must turn in order to understand the *ontological grounding* of Levinas' temporal ethics in *Totality and Infinity*.[117] The question we will have to determine, in the final stages of this chapter, is whether these conditions mange to entirely absolve themselves from the order of history, whether the creation of the I's responsible exposure to Other's temporality does indeed refer "to horizons more vast than history, in which history itself is judged."[118] Before we attend to these questions, however, it will be important to clarify just what Levinas means by these conditions.

3.2. The ontological conditions of the Other: interiority and fecundity

It has become a truism to say that *Totality and Infinity* is an ethical as opposed to an ontological work. And as the last section began to clarify, it is of course undeniable that the bulk of Levinas' analyses in that text focus on describing the nature of the ethical relation between the I and the Other. Nevertheless, it also cannot be said that *Totality and Infinity* entirely shuns ontological concerns.[119] As Tom Sparrow has recently argued, Levinas remains interested in providing "a materialist account of subjectivity."[120] Crucially, as I began to suggest at the end of the last section, this ontological account of subjectivity is also a

[115] TI 247.
[116] TI 247.
[117] It might at first sight appear strange to speak of an ontological grounding to Levinasian ethics, especially given Levinas' own contention that ethics precedes ontology. However, as Robert Bernasconi (2005: 110-111) helpfully points out, the Levinas of *Totality and Infinity* acknowledges that ethics cannot simply start from nowhere. Ethics, to use an expression from the preface to *Existence and Existents*, must have a "foothold in being." EE 15.
[118] TI 246.
[119] "I do believe in the existence of ontological problems and structures, but not in the sense that realists—purely and simply describing given being—ascribe to ontology." TO 39.
[120] Sparrow, 2013: 3; cf. Perpich, 2008: 118.

constitutive part of Levinas' ethical effort in *Totality and Infinity*. When Levinas asks what is perhaps the central ethical question of his work, namely, "how can the same, produced as egoism, enter into a relationship with an other without immediately divesting it of his alterity", we cannot fail to notice Levinas' emphasis on the *production of egoism*.[121] This production of the I as an *egoist* being remains an essential moment of the ethical relation that Levinas wants to describe: "Egoism (…) and the whole dimension of interiority—the articulations of separation—are necessary for the idea of Infinity, the relation with the Other".[122] Indeed, for Levinas, the ethical relation between the I and the Other can be "radical only if each being has its own time, that is, its *interiority*, if each time is not absorbed into [a] universal time."[123] To fully account for the temporal opening of ethics, Levinas must therefore also explain how the same is ontologically produced or individuated as an I with its *own* unique form of temporal interiority.

In the second section of *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas begins to approach this task by describing what he calls "the fundamental phenomenon of enjoyment [*jouissance*]."[124] For Levinas, the primordial relation between an existent and its surrounding world should not be understood in terms of the "utilitarian schematism" of tools and implements, as Heidegger would have it.[125] In the first instance, that relation must be conceived as one of enjoyment. It must refer to the simple fact that an existent primordially *lives from* and is *nourished by* the elemental world that surrounds it: "It is wind, earth, sea, sky, air" that the existent first finds itself involved with.[126] Primordially, the existent derives nourishment and invigoration from these elemental aspects by *transmuting* them into itself.[127] But this transmutation is not yet a vision or a handling of things: it is "simply play or enjoyment of life."[128] In this sense, Levinas argues, if we are to speak of an 'intentionality' of enjoyment, this intentionality is not that of

[121] TI 38.
[122] TI 148.
[123] TI 57.
[124] TI 58.
[125] TI 110.
[126] TI 132.
[127] TI 111.
[128] TI 134.

the Husserlian objectifying act: it does not project itself outwards towards the exteriority of an object to become represented by an act of reflection.[129] As an *immediate* form of nourishment or "living from…" the elements, enjoyment is rather the ontological process by which the existent begins to distinguish itself as unique by virtue of the *happiness* that it derives from its transmutation of the elemental.[130] "Happiness is a principle of individuation": it is the ontological process by which the existent begins to separate itself from the elemental to acquire its own *inner* temporality.[131]

By itself, however, enjoyment remains insufficient as an explanation for inner temporality, since to possess its own temporal interiority, Levinas argues, "the separated being must [also] be able to recollect itself".[132] In order to truly have its own time, the separated being must also be able to remove itself, or take refuge from, the more generalised and anonymous temporality of the elemental—or what Levinas calls the indeterminate temporality of the "there is".[133] And this condition is "produced concretely [only] as *habitation in a dwelling* or a Home", for only the home brings an existent its required distance from the elemental.[134] In this particular sense, Levinas continues, the home is not purely an object among objects. Phenomenologically, the home's significance lies in the ability it endows the subject to carve out its own interiority and to thus open onto the world from a concretised position of inwardness: "Man abides in the world as having come to it from a private domain, from being at home with himself."[135] Hence, it is as proceeding from its home—from its dwelling—that the existent is concretely produced as "a being absolutely closed over upon

[129] TI 124-125.
[130] TI 110.
[131] TI 147.
[132] TI 150.
[133] TI 142.
[134] TI 150.
[135] TI 152. Levinas' thought here bears a surface resemblance to Heidegger's (1993a: 227-228), who writes in his *Letter on Humanism*: "Only from this dwelling 'has' [man] 'language' as the home that preserves the ecstatic for his essence." However, unlike Heidegger, Levinas does not see the dwelling as an ecstatic openness onto the truth of Being, and neither does he think dwelling "in terms of the history of Being", as does Heidegger (241-242). For Levinas, to think dwelling in such terms is to collapse its irreducible sense *qua* interiority: "The thesis of the primacy of history constitutes an option for the comprehension of being in which interiority is sacrificed. The present work proposes another option" (TI 57). For more on these points, see also: Drabinski, 2014: 245-260; Dungey, 2007: 234-258; Heidegger, 1993b: 347-363.

itself".[136] Put simply, "dwelling accomplishes separation."[137]

This production of a separated interiority is not the home's sole function. As well as being a site of closure from the elements, the home also presents the subject with the opportunity to *open* itself up to its outside.[138] Now, this opening that the home makes possible has at least two senses, for Levinas. The first of these is ontological, and it refers to the possibility that the home creates in allowing the separated being to contemplate 'the world outside': "the subject contemplating the world presupposes the event of dwelling".[139] The second, more important, of these senses is *ethical*, and it refers to the possibility that the dwelling creates in allowing the separated subject to relate itself to the exteriority of the *Other*.[140] The home, for Levinas, is not exclusively a site where the individuated I can remove itself from the elements. It is also the site where the I first encounters another human Other: the woman.[141] As Levinas puts this point:

> The interiority of recollection is a solitude in a world already human. Recollection refers to a welcome. (…) And the other whose presence is discreetly an absence, with which is accomplished the primary hospitable welcome which describes the field of intimacy, is the

[136] TI 148.
[137] TI 151.
[138] The dwelling thus fulfills Levinas' requirement that "Interiority must be at the same time closed and open." TI 148-149.
[139] TI 153.
[140] cf. Heidegger, 1993a: 255-260.
[141] The equation Levinas establishes between femininity and the dwelling has come under severe criticism by feminist scholars for perpetuating some of the worst patriarchal tendencies of the Western philosophical tradition. True, *Totality and Infinity* qualifies the nature of this equation somewhat by insisting that "the empirical absence of the human being of 'feminine sex' in a dwelling nowise affects the dimension of femininity which remains open there" (TI 158). This qualification has led some defenders of Levinas, like Adriaan Peperzak (1993: 158) and Richard Cohen (1994: 195-204), to argue that Levinas' appeal to the feminine is purely 'metaphorical'. However, as Stella Sandford (2000: 47) has convincingly retorted, this kind of defence remains inadequate, for if, "as a metaphor, the trope of the feminine ha[d] no connection whatsoever, no linguistic or cultural reference at all to empirically existing women, [then] this would deprive the metaphor not just of its rhetorical force, but of its very sense: of any possibility of it functioning with any intended meaning at all" (cf. Katz, 2003: 164 for an equivalent response to Cohen). I want to return to this debate in more detail in the next chapter, for as we will see there, the ethical status of femininity and its relation to the historical also emerges as a problem in *Otherwise than Being*. In this chapter, I want to focus on a problem that is not entirely unrelated to this question (as the next section will show), but which *is* distinctive to *Totality and Infinity*, namely, the historical implication that the concept of paternity introduces into Levinas' temporal ethics.

For further discussion on Levinas' concepts of dwelling and the feminine, see also: Ainley, 1996: 7-21; Beauvoir, 1984: 16; Chanter, 1998: 32-56; Chanter, 2001a: 37-74; Chanter, 2001b: 10-25; Katz, 2001: 145-170; Sandford, 2002: 139-140; Sebbah, 2006: 269-272.

> Woman. The woman is the condition for recollection, the interiority of the Home, and inhabitation.[142]

The home, being inhabited by the woman and the field of intimacy she establishes, instils in the separated I the possibility for an ethical opening because it forces it to confront a form of human alterity (that is, femininity) *already* at the level of interiority. Indeed, by placing the dwelling I in relation with a form of otherness that is not simply that of the elemental world, the home, despite being a site of separation, already "includes all the possibilities of the transcendent relationship with the Other."[143] In this sense, the dwelling not only enables the I to fully individuate its own form of temporal interiority, but also presents it with the unique possibility for ethics: "The relation with infinity remains as another possibility of the being recollected in its dwelling. The possibility for the home to open to the Other is as essential to the essence of the home as closed doors and windows."[144]

It is thus with the phenomenology of dwelling that Levinas begins to ground his conception of temporal ethics. But at the level of dwelling, Levinas insists, this elaboration remains incomplete, for "habitation is not yet the transcendence of language."[145] Although the domestic meeting with feminine alterity already prepares the I for an encounter with an absolute temporal alterity, this encounter can be fully concretised only *beyond* the level of interiority of the home.[146] The meeting with feminine alterity in the dwelling, Levinas stresses, is not yet the full exteriority of language, because the woman's face expresses only "a language without teaching, a silent language (….) a truncated, stammering, still elementary language."[147] As such, the domestic encounter with feminine alterity still contains with it the risk that the I will let itself become "deceived" by its elemental enjoyment and its immersion

[142] TI 155. Despite ultimately shying away from it, Derrida (1999: 36-45, 93-94) suggests the possibility of developing a feminist reading of Levinas on the basis of this passage.
[143] TI 155.
[144] TI 173.
[145] TI 155.
[146] Here, Levinas once again reaffirms the relativity of feminine alterity in relation to the absolute (masculine) alterity of the Other. For a defense of Levinas on this score and a concomitant response, see, respectively: Wyschogrod, 1974: 120; Sandford, 1998: 13-14.
[147] TI 155.

in the historical world of visible phenomena.[148] Now, as Levinas continually argues, this risk is one that can never be fully overcome, since, as noted, the I can welcome alterity precisely *only* on the basis of its interiority and dwelling: "'I welcome the Other who presents himself in my home by opening my home to him."[149] This risk *can*, nevertheless, be attenuated by the ethical intervention of "the indiscreet face of the Other that calls me into question", that is, by the concrete "surpassing of phenomenal or inward existence" that the Other brings about in the I.[150]

At this point in the analysis, however, Levinas has still not quite explained how the Other is capable of attenuating the I's egoistic tendencies. But clearly this task cannot be ignored, for, as Levinas frequently cautions, without the concrete intervention of the Other "the I returns to itself, finds itself again in the same despite all its recommencements, falls back on its feet again solitary, delineates but an irreversible fate."[151] To repeat, this return must always remain as a possibility for the separated I; the process of egoist individuation always "leaves room" for this kind of egoist return.[152] But this incessant return to itself is not the *only* meaning that can be attributed to the I's existence, because, as previously noted, its position as I *also* consists of its capacity to respond responsibly to the radical temporality of the Other.[153] "The acuity of the problem [therefore] lies in the necessity of maintaining the I in the transcendence with which it has hitherto seemed incompatible."[154] Otherwise said, in order to account for the temporal opening of ethics we also need *another* notion—one that goes beyond the egoist movements of interiority—to show how the I is capable of receiving the infinite time of the Other. We must provide an account of how the I's uprootedness from history finds its grounding condition in a phenomenon that is not itself historical.[155] In Levinas' words, "we must indicate a plane both presupposing and transcending the epiphany

[148] TI 179-180.
[149] TI 171, cf. 216.
[150] TI 171, 183.
[151] TI 270.
[152] TI 216.
[153] TI 215.
[154] TI 276.
[155] TI 247.

of the Other in the face, a plane where the I bears itself beyond death and recovers also from its return to itself. This plane is that of love and fecundity, where subjectivity is posited in function of these movements."[156] In short, it is on the ontological planes of love and fecundity that we must search for the condition of the face's temporal epiphany.[157]

Properly speaking, love (*eros*) provides an entry into this plane beyond egoism because in the erotic relation the I is never purely involved with itself.[158] As Levinas puts this point: "Eros delivers from this encumberment, arrests the return of the I to itself", because it always begins with the interest for an-Other.[159] Additionally, the erotic relation is not governed by visibility; its basic modality is that of the caress, and for Levinas, "what the caress seeks is not situated in a perspective and the light of the graspable."[160] The caress is a carnal relation between beings that "does not see."[161] In these two senses, then, love stands as an important moment in the I's divestment from itself and its own egoism: "the transcendence of discourse is bound to love."[162] In isolation, however, love remains incapable of concretising a deliverance from egoism. For Levinas, love remains a relation where the subjective modalities of egoism are still very much possible. "I love fully only if the Other loves me", which entails that "to love is also to love oneself in love, and thus to return to oneself. Love does not transcend unequivocably—it is complacent, it is pleasure and dual egoism."[163] In other words, although love begins to point towards that dimension where the I irrevocably divests itself of its egoism, love is still not quite this condition. "The metaphysical event of transcendence—the welcome of the Other, hospitality—Desire and language—is not

[156] TI 253.
[157] TI 247.
[158] Levinas' conception of *eros* (with its associated modalities of voluptuosity and the caress) has also come under scrutiny by feminist scholars like Luce Irigaray (1991: 196-224; 1993: 185-217) for its positioning of femininity as mediate and subordinate vis-à-vis the more 'important' relation between the father and the son. Levinas recognises that the "notion of maternity must be introduced" to account for this paternal relation, but beyond this recognition, the feminine here continues to be relegated to the status of "a society without language" (TI 265). For more on these points, see also: Ainley, 1998: 70-82; Chanter, 1995: 196-224.
[159] TI 271, cf. 256.
[160] TI 258.
[161] TI 260.
[162] TI 254.
[163] TI 266.

accomplished as love."[164]

Metaphysics or ethics can be established only through the "ontological category [*catégorie ontologique*]" of fecundity, which according to Levinas consists of the relationship between the father and his son.[165] Now, fecundity is able to play this grounding function for ethics in part because it is *not eros*.[166] Like *eros*, to be sure, fecundity enables the I to transcend the world of visibility and light.[167] However, in fecundity, "subjectivity no longer has the same meaning" that it had in the erotic relation.[168] If the erotic relation could still tend towards double egoism, "the inevitable reference of the erotic to the future in fecundity reveals a radically different structure".[169] As Levinas defines it, fecundity, or

> Paternity is a relation with a stranger who while being Other (…) *is* me, a relation of the I with a self which yet is not me. In this 'I am' being is no longer Eleatic unity. In existing itself there is a multiplicity and a transcendence. In this transcendence the I is not swept away, since the son is not me; and yet I *am* my son. The fecundity of the I is its very transcendence.[170]

Levinas' basic idea here is that fecundity or paternity establishes a relation where the I is *both* itself *and* not itself at the same time. In a certain sense, the father *is* his son: "I do not have my child; I *am* my child."[171] Yet, simultaneously, the child is a stranger to its father; the child *is not* its father because it retains its own individuality and a power over its own future. This entails that in fecundity, the child presents itself as the I simultaneously divorced from itself: "He is me a stranger to myself."[172] The sense of this fecund estrangement is not purely

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[164] TI 254.
[165] TI 277.
[166] This distinction between the paternity of fecundity and the femininity of *eros* has not always been recognised by Levinas scholars. Tina Chanter (1998: 43), for example, collapses this distinction when she writes that "love is the movement of eros, a movement which takes place both as voluptuosity and as fecundity." In upholding this view, however, Chanter overlooks the significance of Levinas' repeated claim that *only* fecundity accomplishes transcendence. For two views contrasting with Chanter's, see: Nancy, 1991: 105; Sandford, 2000: 65-66.
[167] TI 268.
[168] TI 272.
[169] TI 272.
[170] TI 277.
[171] TI 277.
[172] TI 267.

psychological.[173] Indeed, for Levinas, the familial situation of fecundity, far from referring only to the father's conception of his son, assumes an *ontological* significance in that it effectuates a veritable break or rupture within *being itself*—that is, with being understood in its Parmenidean sense, where "[u]nity alone is ontologically privileged."[174] Through paternity, being is no longer produced as a unified or continuous succession of moments that remain indifferent to one another: "Being is no longer produced at one blow, irremissibly present. (….) Infinite being is produced as times, that is, in several times across the dead time that separates the father from the son."[175] In other words, fecundity creates precisely that ontological *discontinuity* or *rupture* that is required for the I to receive the time of absolute alterity: "Being is [here] produced as multiple and as split into the same and other; this is its ultimate structure."[176] Rather than arriving as something that belongs to the I's future projects and possibilities, time now "comes to me across an absolute interval whose other shore the Other absolutely other—though he be my son—is alone capable of marking."[177] And it is in this sense that the familial relation of fecundity "articulates [*articule*] the time of the absolutely other."[178] Rather than receiving the futurity of time only on the basis of its egoism, in fecundity the I becomes "capable of another fate than its own".[179] Paternity "opens up a plane where the I is divested of its tragic egoity, which turns back to itself, and yet is not purely and simply dissolved to the collective."[180] Indeed, because in paternity the I breaks free of itself, "without thereby ceasing to be an I, for the I *is* its son", fecundity describes precisely that condition through which the I can receive the time of infinity.[181] It describes the condition where the I can at once *remain* itself whilst simultaneously *receiving* an absolutely other time from a stranger who is not itself.[182]

[173] TO 92.
[174] TI 274. cf. TO 91.
[175] TI 283-284.
[176] TI 269.
[177] TI 283.
[178] TI 269.
[179] TI 282.
[180] TI 273.
[181] TI 278, cf. TO 94.
[182] TI 267.

The rupture that paternity effects in being does not assume an exclusively biological sense. “Biological fecundity is but one of the forms of paternity. Paternity, as a primordial effectuation [*effectuation*] of time can, among men, be borne by the biological life, but be lived beyond it.”[183] This means that the ethical significance of fecundity is not to be reduced to the actual or “biologically empirical” relations that pertain between biological fathers and their sons.[184] Because fecundity is an ontological category, it carries a sense that is wider than mere “biological paternity which is but its empirical expression.”[185] In a similar way, familial fecundity should not be understood historically.[186] Indeed, for Levinas, fecundity must be taken as precisely a break or rupture with the historical: “The rupture of historical and totalised duration, which dead time [or fecundity] marks, is the very rupture that creation operates in being.”[187] This entails that far from operating at the level of the I’s immersion in the visible and economic temporality of history, the “deepening of the inner life” that fecundity accomplishes is not “guided by the evidences of history.”[188] Fecundity does not indicate “a history and events that can occur to a residue of identity, an identity holding on by a thread, an I that would ensure the continuity of the avatars.”[189] As the ontological situation that effectuates a rupture in egoist being, fecundity refers to “horizons more vast than history, in which history itself is judged.”[190] And if, as Levinas explicitly states, “[f]ecundity continues history”, this is only in the restricted sense that fecundity enables the I to retain a sense of itself through the very rupture that it undergoes in the familial situation of paternity.[191] Properly speaking, however, that rupture or discontinuity is *not* itself historical: “History is worked over [*travaillée*] by the ruptures of history”.[192] Hence, if time can be given in the ethical relation as infinite and as beyond history, this is because that infinity “presupposes the relation of the I with the Other and, at its basis [*à son base*], fecundity across the

[183] TI 247.
[184] TI 277; cf. TO 92.
[185] Etienne Feron, cited in Sandford, 2000: 70.
[186] cf. TO 79.
[187] TI 58.
[188] TI 246.
[189] TI 268.
[190] TI 246.
[191] TI 268, cf. 278.
[192] TI 52.

discontinuous which constitutes time."[193] In short, fecundity is precisely the ontological condition that enables the I to finally uproot itself from history and to thus truly relate itself to the Other's infinite temporality.[194] "The relation with the child—that is, the relation with the other that is not a power, but fecundity—establishes relationship [*met en rapport*] with the absolute future, or infinite time."[195]

3.3. The problem of history *in* fecundity

We have seen Levinas frame his temporal ethics in terms of the metaphysical or social relation between the I and the Other. We have also noted that though this ethical relation is in a certain sense a concrete experience for the I, it nonetheless finds its proper condition in certain ontological structures—namely, the individuation of the I in interiority and its 'subsequent' rupturing in fecundity.[196] Without these two conditions, the temporal ethics that Levinas envisages would not be possible. Without them, there would be no absolute future or infinite time beyond history, and "the I would remain a subject in which every adventure would revert into the adventure of a fate."[197] Now, the question that I want to pose in the remainder of this chapter is whether the ethical framework that Levinas presents in *Totality and Infinity* is in fact capable of absolving itself from all implication with the order of history. As repeatedly noted, it is precisely this kind of implication with the historical that Levinas

[193] TI 284.
[194] TI 52.
[195] TI 268.
[196] Although the structure of *Totality and Infinity* encourages a reading wherein the I is *first* individuated in enjoyment and dwelling, and only later, or *subsequently*, called to respond to the Other through fecundity, Levinas also gives us good reason to assume an inverse ordering here, particularly when he writes that "this relation of the father with the son is not *added* to the already constituted I of the son, as a good fortune. The paternal Eros first invests the unicity of the son; his I qua filial commences not in enjoyment but in election. He is unique for himself because he is unique for his father." TI 279.

Ultimately, and because this claim suggests that fecundity is the *more foundational* of the two conditions that I have thus far described in *Totality and Infinity*, in what follows, I want to primarily direct my critical attention to that aspect of Levinas' work, leaving aside the potential historical implication that his analyses of interiority might also involve. I believe that insofar as they continue to be premised on a privileging of the masculine in dwelling, those analyses remain subject to the same problems that I now seek to determine in relation to fecundity. But because fecundity seems to be the more 'foundational' of the two conditions for Levinas, I here leave aside a consideration of that question.
[197] TI 282.

continually denies in his text: not only does the ethical relation consist of man's uprootedness from history, but so too, the ontological category that properly speaking grounds this relation (fecundity) is itself said to constitute a rupture with the historical. But how credible are Levinas' assertions on these points? This is the question I now want to tackle as a way of exploring whether Levinas' temporal ethics can indeed provide a successful resolution to the problem of history that appears in Bergson's philosophy.

This question is vital, I contend, not simply because, like Bergson before him, Levinas repeatedly frames his temporal ethics as operating beyond history. In a real sense, the question of history is also one that Derrida repeatedly asks of Levinas in his substantive and hugely influential reading of *Totality and Infinity*: "Violence and Metaphysics".[198] In this text, Derrida admires Levinas' effort to describe the ethical relation as "the only possible opening [*ouverture*] of time, the only pure future, the only pure expenditure *beyond* history as economy."[199] There is a kind of unique audacity to Levinas' ethical enterprise, an audacity that can make us tremble, Derrida says.[200] At the same time, we must question the extent to which Levinasian ethics can actually and credibly position itself as *outside* of all history.[201] Faced with Levinas' definition of history as an economic blindness to the Other, Derrida writes, "[o]ne wonders whether history itself does not begin with this relationship to the other which Levinas places beyond history."[202] One wonders not only whether the ethical relation to the Other is not more implicated with history than Levinas would like to admit, but also, or more broadly, whether—via this implication—the ethical relation does not *itself* take up a historical aspect, whether the metaphysical transcendence Levinas speaks of is not *itself*

[198] The influence of Derrida's text on Levinas is perhaps most marked (albeit implicitly) in the revised conception of language that the latter provides in *Otherwise than Being*. More explicitly, Levinas also responds to Derrida in a short, 1973 piece entitled "Jacques Derrida: Wholly Otherwise": Levinas, 1991: 3-11.
[199] VM 95.
[200] VM 151, 82.
[201] Derrida's focus on the question of history is not unique to his engagement with Levinas. From different angles, this question also occupies Derrida's reading of Foucault in "Cogito and the History of Madness", just as it dominates his focus on Heidegger in lectures around this period. cf. Derrida, 1978: 31-63; Derrida, 2016: passim.
For more on Derrida's continued interest in the question of history, see also: Gaston, 2018.
[202] VM 94.

"history, and not beyond history."[203] This question regarding history, furthermore, is not merely incidental from the perspective of Levinasian ethics. Indeed, given the importance that Levinas himself clearly attaches to the distinction between ethics and history, Derrida argues, "[t]he framework of this question should govern the entire reading of *Totality and Infinity*."[204]

For Derrida, this question on the relation between ethics and history is primarily prompted by Levinas' conception of language as a break with the historical. Derrida clarifies that the questions he asks of Levinas—including that of history—"are all, in several senses, questions of language: questions of language and the question of language."[205] The main issue, as Derrida conceives it, is that in positioning the face as a temporal opening that breaks with the conceptual modalities that have traditionally dominated the history of Western philosophy (e.g. ontology, knowledge and visibility), Levinas has not sufficiently considered the extent to which his *own* language remains contaminated by that very tradition. This is not a matter of simply accusing Levinas of introducing logical contradictions and incoherencies into his ethical system.[206] It is rather a matter of showing that the very conceptual heritage that Levinas attempts to escape with his description of the face *necessarily* inscribes itself into his ethics as a consequence of his own linguistic act of description.[207] As an example of this process of inscription, Derrida cites Levinas' frequent use of the term 'exteriority'.[208] He notes that as well as using this term abundantly, "Levinas also intends to show that *true* exteriority is not spatial, for space is the Site of the Same."[209] In using exteriority negatively in this way, however, Levinas has not sufficiently considered the extent to which his usage continues to precisely invoke that spatiality and visibility that

[203] VM 117.
[204] VM 94.
[205] VM 109.
[206] VM 111.
[207] For Derrida, there is indeed a certain *necessity* to this inscription insofar as "one would never come across a language without the rupture of space, an aerial or aquatic language". In this complicity with space and light, Derrida argues, language always bears within it an "unlimited power of envelopment, by which he who attempts to repel it [will] always already be *overtaken*". VM 112-113.
[208] Derrida picks this example because it prominently figures in Levinas' chosen subtitle for *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. VM 112.
[209] VM 112.

the term—in its strictly non-spatial sense—is meant to exceed. "Why is it necessary still to use the word 'exteriority' (which, if it has a meaning (…) obstinately beckons toward space and light) in order to signify a nonspatial relationship? (….) To say that the infinite exteriority of the other *is not* spatial, is *non*-exteriority and *non*-interiority, to be unable to designate it otherwise than negatively—is this not to acknowledge that the infinite (…) cannot be stated?"[210] What Derrida is illustrating with these two rhetorical questions is the fact that any philosophical language, insofar as it belongs to a system of languages in general, always necessarily bears within it an "original and irreducible" tendency to spatialise and illuminate.[211] To succeed, a philosophical project hoping to exceed space and visibility *through language* must therefore necessarily contend with this irreducible problem. In Derrida's own words: "the attempt to achieve an opening [*percée*] toward the beyond of philosophical discourse, by means of philosophical discourse, which can never be shaken off [*s'arracher*] completely, cannot possibly succeed *within language* (…) except by formally and thematically posing *the question* [problème] *of the relations between belonging and the opening,* the *question of closure* [le problème de la clôture]."[212] Yet, it is precisely this formal and thematic analysis of language's necessary implication with the conceptuality that it presumably exceeds that Levinas fails to provide in *Totality and Infinity*.[213]

The issue is compounded, Derrida argues, because "when confronted with these classical difficulties of language, Levinas cannot provide himself with the classical resources against them."[214] Indeed, unlike Bergson, who, as chapter one highlighted, positions the spatiality and conceptuality of language in strict opposition to the immediacy of intuition, Levinas effectively reverses this formula. In so doing, however, Levinas also disavows the best weapon against Derrida's questions on language: "disdain of discourse."[215] Derrida puts the point thus:

[210] VM 112-113.
[211] VM 113.
[212] VM 110.
[213] Thorsteinsson, 2014: 156.
[214] VM 116.
[215] VM 116.

> Bergson had the right to announce the intuition of duration, and to denounce intellectual spatialisation, within a language given over to space. It was not a question of saving, but of destroying discourse within 'metaphysics', the science which allegedly 'does without symbols.' (….) Language being defined as a historical residue, there was no contradiction in utilising it, for better or for worse, in order to denounce its own betrayal, and then to abandon it to its own insufficiency as a rhetorical refuse, *speech lost to metaphysics*. Like negative theology, a philosophy of intuitive communion gave itself the right (correctly or incorrectly, another problem) to travel through philosophical discourse as through a foreign medium. But what happens when the right is no longer given [as in Levinas], when the possibility of metaphysics is the possibility of speech? (…) And if the speech which must inaugurate and maintain absolute separation is by its essence rooted in space, which cannot conceive separation and absolute alterity?[216]

Derrida's answer to these last two questions is that if we accept *both* Levinas' claim that only discourse (and not intuitive contact) is ethically righteous, *and* the idea that "all discourse essentially retains within it space and the Same", then the discourse that Levinas privileges from an ethical perspective is *itself* violent.[217] Even in its ethical function—that is, as an opening onto absolute temporal alterity—discourse carries within it an irreducible tendency to do injustice to that very alterity: "language can only indefinitely tend toward justice by acknowledging and practicing the violence within it. Violence against violence. *Economy* of violence."[218] Furthermore, Derrida insists, if, like Levinas, we want to continue to equate violence and economy with history (and for Derrida, "this is the legitimate truism from which Levinas always draws inspiration"), then the ethical opening that Levinas describes is *itself* historical.[219] "If speech is a movement of metaphysical transcendence", and if speech, in its essential spatiality and visibility, always perpetuates an economy of violence, then Levinasian ethics or metaphysics "is history, and not beyond history."[220] As such: "History is not the totality transcended by eschatology, metaphysics, or speech. It is transcendence

[216] VM 116.
[217] VM 116-117.
[218] VM 117.
[219] VM 117.
[220] VM 117.

itself."[221]

In the remainder of "Violence and Metaphysics", Derrida arrives at a similar conclusion via a detailed analysis of the relation between *Totality and Infinity* and Husserl and Heidegger's thought. These analyses are long and complex, and we do not need to familiarise ourselves with their entire richness. Suffice it to say here that in these passages Derrida attempts to demonstrate that just as Levinas' metaphysics remains "unable to escape its ancestry in light", so too, it "always presupposes a phenomenology in its very critique of [Husserlian] phenomenology", just as it supposes and practices "the thought of precomprehension of Being" even as it directs itself against Heideggerian ontology.[222] For Derrida, these analyses contain a clear upshot regarding the relation between Levinasian ethics and history. Once again, if, like Levinas, we want to continue to equate ontology and phenomenality with the play of visibility and the same—in a word, with history—then Levinas' own ethics, in *presupposing* the articulations of phenomenology and ontology in its presumed rupture away from them, remains inevitably caught up with the order of the historical. Indeed, if phenomenality and ontology continue to contaminate Levinas' conception of the ethical opening, then the 'beyond history' that Levinas equates with the Other cannot be reached or stated "except *through violence*. This infinite passage through violence is what is called history."[223] This continued imbrication between ethics and history also has implications for the temporality that the Other's face is said to open up, according to

[221] VM 117.

[222] VM 118, 141. With regards to Husserl, Derrida demonstrates this conclusion by showing (among other things) that Levinas' description of the I's exposure to the Other's alterity is not wholly different from the 'mediate appresentation' that Husserl describes in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations* (cf. Husserl, 1960: 108-120)—a thesis that Levinas is so critical of in *Totality and Infinity*. Alongside this point, Derrida also emphasises, with Husserl, that "it is impossible to encounter the alter ego (in the very form of the encounter described by Levinas) (…) if this other, in its alterity, does not *appear* for an ego (in general)" (VM 123). This entails that there is no purity between the absolute alterity of the Other and the I: "the other is absolutely other only if he is an ego, that is, in a certain way, if he is the same as I." VM 127.

Derrida's argument on Heidegger follows a similar structure. As well as defending Heidegger against Levinas' accusation that Being is a neutral term that takes precedence over existents (Being is said to always be the *Being-of* a particular existent), Derrida also attempts to show, *pace* Levinas, that "the *recognition* of the essence [or Being-] of the existent (for example someone, existent *as* other, *as* other self, etc.) (….) conditions the *respect* [and responsibility] for the other *as what it is*: other." VM 136-138.

[223] VM 130, cf. 148.

Derrida. Indeed, if, as Levinas claims, temporal ethics moves beyond history by exposing the I to the time of infinity, and if history is nothing more than that infinity merely *temporalised* in accordance with an identifiable present (as we have already seen Levinas argue in *Totality and Infinity*), then it is only *in* and *through* the present that "all temporal alterity can be constituted and appear as such (…) [that is, only] in the unity and actuality of my living present."[224] This entails that far from being the immediate relation of the I with a time that is absolutely *beyond* history, the ethical relation not only finds itself situated and rooted in history, but also encompasses within it the violence that its historical presence necessarily implicates. "In the last analysis, if one wishes to determine violence as the necessity that the other not appear as what it is (…) then time is violence."[225]

In a certain sense, Derrida argues, this complex implication between temporal ethics, history and violence is both inevitable and intractable. A metaphysics like Levinas'—which privileges language as its primary ethical modality—always involves a necessary violence.[226] But this is not to suggest that metaphysics cannot ever hope to avoid *all kinds* of violence. Indeed, according to Derrida, though violence is always necessary to a discursive ethics, it is not inevitable that ethics always succumb to the *worst* kind of violence, that is, to that violence that consists of *silencing* or *repressing* the alterity that discourse can also express.[227] But for ethics to tackle this worst violence, Derrida insists, it must remain *ethically vigilant* to its own implication in history and to the violence that this implication necessarily entails: "This *vigilance* is a violence chosen as the least violence by a philosophy that takes history, that is, finitude, seriously; a philosophy aware of itself as *historical* in each of its aspects (…), and aware of itself, as Levinas says in another sense, as *economy*."[228] Such vigilance also involves recognising that history need not be exclusively equated with the visible or economic totality of the Same; it involves acknowledging that history can—even if it remains violence against alterity—also function as a site where that alterity

[224] VM 132.
[225] VM 133.
[226] VM 112.
[227] VM 130.
[228] VM 117.

expresses itself.[229] However, in this context, the problem with *Totality and Infinity* is that because it stays *silent* on the implication between its own ethics and history, it also fails to avail itself of the opportunity to vigilantly tackle its *own* violent tendencies. "This secondary war [against ethical violence], as the avowal of violence, is the least possible violence, the only way to repress the worst violence, the violence of primitive and prelogical silence".[230] Yet, it is precisely this secondary war against violence that *Totality and Infinity* cannot enter into by refusing to acknowledge the implication between temporal ethics and history. If the I's ethical exposure to temporal alterity always implies a certain violence, then by refusing to acknowledge and avow this very implication, Levinas also provides us with no ethical means by which to resist and negotiate it.

What are we to make of Derrida's reading of Levinas? It is clear that this reading remains a vital resource for articulating how Levinas' temporal ethics in *Totality and Infinity* remains caught up with the very history that it presents itself as eschewing and escaping. In effect, Derrida alerts us to that fact that if Levinas moves away from the ethical modalities that operated in Bergson's temporal ethics, he does not, by those same means, necessarily overcome the problem of history that continued to haunt that intuitive philosophy. Indeed, by asking his series of questions on language, Derrida shows us that Levinas' ethics is more rooted in history than the latter is willing to admit. However, while Derrida's resolute focus on language remains valuable, it also leads him to overlook some other, equally significant and problematic aspects of Levinas' temporal ethics. As I attempted to show in the last section, Levinas' conception of ethics in *Totality and Infinity* is not limited to an account of the 'effects' that the Other—as interlocutor or face—exerts on the I. That conception also contains important descriptions about the ontological *conditions* that make those effects *possible* in the first place, that is, interiority and fecundity. Now, it is true that "Violence and Metaphysics" does not claim to provide more than a "very partial" reading of *Totality and*

[229] At several points in "Violence and Metaphysics", Derrida gestures towards an alternative conception of history as a site that is both violent *and* open—a type of history, he suggests, that no "longer accommodate the concept of history as it has always functioned." VM 148-149, cf. 117, 122-123.
[230] VM 130.

Infinity.[231] Specifically, Derrida limits his reading of Levinas to the latter's description of the face, leaving aside any detailed consideration of what I have thus far called the ontological conditions for that experience.[232] In this regard, Derrida even goes as far as confessing his "total deafness" to Levinas' assertions on fecundity.[233] Yet, by Derrida's own admission, this deafness or partiality remains both perplexing and problematic.[234] For in the process of telling us that he will not focus on Levinas' analyses of those conditions, Derrida also reveals that he considers those analyses to be quite *free* as regards traditional conceptuality. He writes: "These analyses are not only an indefatigable and interminable destruction of 'formal logic': they are so acute and so free [*libres*] as concerns traditional conceptuality, that a commentary running several pages would betray them immeasurably."[235] But if, as we have seen, the point of Derrida's reading is to demonstrate that Levinas' ethics remains caught up with the conceptuality (and, by implication, with the history) that it attempts to evade, then is it not *precisely* at the level of these analyses that are "so free as concerns traditional conceptuality" that we must also seek to determine how far Levinas' ethical thought manages to uproot itself from history?[236] Is the importance of this task not, moreover, reinforced by Levinas' own claim that the ontological condition of fecundity—as dead time—is *not* historical? Indeed, it seems that to fully confirm Derrida's broad contention that Levinas' temporal ethics remains caught up with history, we also have to go beyond the scope of the former's partial focus on language. We also have to ask how fecundity—as the 'first' ontological condition of the I's exposure to the Other—might itself function to *root* Levinas' temporal ethics in the domain of the historical.[237]

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[231] VM 84.
[232] cf. VM 92-109.
[233] "Finally, let us confess our total deafness to propositions of this type: 'Being occurs as multiple, and as divided into Same and Other. This is its ultimate structure' (TI 269)." VM 127.
[234] Simon Critchley (2014: 133, cf. 106n) also expresses reservations about Derrida's decision to remain silent on fecundity: "if the governing intention of Levinas' work, that of a break with Parmenides, is achieved in those descriptions of eros, fecundity and pluralism (…) then does not their omission mark a serious flaw in the fabric of 'Violence and Metaphysics'?"
[235] VM 315n.
[236] For the purposes of his reading of Levinas, Derrida strongly equates conceptuality with history: cf. VM 148.
[237] Once again, I am here leaving aside interiority to focus on fecundity for the reasons given in the first footnote of this section.

It might not immediately be clear how fecundity implicates Levinas' temporal ethics with history. If we take Levinas at his word that fecundity is *not* historical, we seem to be left with no ground on which to stand. But I contend that we should not simply take Levinas at his word here. For if Levinas is perhaps right to insist that fecundity—as a familial situation between the father and his son—does not bear an exclusively biological sense, it is a much greater stretch to suggest that this situation is also completely removed from the domain of history. As even Hegel—to whom Levinas of course refers in the process of outlining his conception of fecundity—recognises in the *Philosophy of Right*, though the family is perhaps an immediate ethical situation that becomes "objective" only in the relation between parents and their children, it is not, by that same token, completely extricated from the domain of history.[238] On Hegel's conception, not only does the relation between parents and their children find itself externally affected by historically constituted norms and institutions, but so too, its "self-subsistent" unity always finds itself beckoned by "the tremendous power [of an economic civil society] which draws people into itself and claims from them that they work for it".[239] In a more contemporary key, Deleuze and Guattari likewise insist that the family is not to be regarded as a foundational structure that 'precedes' any and all involvement with economic history. Indeed, according to the authors' famous analysis of the family in *Anti-Oedipus*, the family is never prior to history and politics: "The father, the mother, and the I [*moi*] are at grips with, and directly coupled to, the elements of the political and historical situation—the soldier, the cop, the occupier, the collaborator, the radical, the resister, the boss, the boss's wife (…). In a word, the family is never a microcosm in the sense of an autonomous figure, even when inscribed in a larger circle that it is said to mediate and express."[240] Or, as Claire Colebrook summarises this conception of the family: "Deleuze and Guattari use history in *Anti-Oedipus* to show that the linguistic and familial subject of modernity is the consequence of a contingent history (….) Not only is there no such natural kind as 'man', or even 'the family'—such selections occur only when an array of complex,

[238] cf. TI 267, 241; Hegel, 2008: §173.
[239] Hegel, 2008: §181, §238.
[240] AO 97.

varying and radically different genetic variations are [politically] coded as belonging to certain groups or territories."[241]

If one accepts such historical definitions of the family, then Levinas' ethics is not as removed from the domain of history as he would have us believe. If the family has a history, if the familial relation between, say, a father and his son is determined historically, then that relation cannot play the role of a grounding condition for ethics without *at the same time* firmly placing that ethics within the horizon of history. But what reason do we have for accepting these as opposed to Levinas' own definition of the family as a break with the historical? If the family *was* historical, should we not expect to find at least a *trace* of this history in Levinas' own conception, which purports precisely to be ahistorical? Indeed, we should. And in my view, the best indication that the familial structure Levinas describes *is* historical can be gleaned from its explicit prioritisation of *masculinity* as the essential sense of fecundity. As the last section showed, Levinas' discussion of fecundity explicitly privileges the masculine figures of the father and his son: it is the estrangement that the father feels in relation to his son that functions as the rupture in being that is required for infinite time. To be sure, the figure of the mother is not completely removed from this picture, since, as Levinas claims, the mother must be introduced to account for the son's relation with the father across fecundity.[242] Nevertheless, from the perspective of time, it is the relation between the two masculine beings (father-son) that remains determinant: "The [father's] relation with [its masculine] child (…) establishes relation with the absolute future, or infinite time."[243]

Now, leaving aside the issue that maternity perhaps provides a more apt metaphor for the kind of self-estrangement that Levinas intends the concept of fecundity to capture, one of the key questions that emerges from Levinas' basic account of that concept is how the content, distribution, and significance of the basic familial triad (father-mother-child) can be

[241] Colebrook, 2009: 22-23.
[242] TI 278.
[243] TI 268.

determined *if not historically*.[244] How, starting from the familial triad (and assuming that families *are* triadic), can we decide, for example, that the relation between father and son is the one that is most significant for ethics *if not* by implicitly appealing to a range of historically defined norms that continue to operate in Western societies? How can we insist on the importance of the *masculine* relation over all others without simultaneously rooting ourselves on an ideological state of affairs dictating that the masculine should take ethical precedence over the feminine, that the masculine relation is more apt for the 'exteriority' of ethics than the 'domesticity' of its feminine counterparts? As Stella Sandford points out, within the general framework of Levinas' ethics, "these words 'masculine' and 'feminine' are not discrete and interchangeable linguistic elements but *ideological signs with a history*".[245] Indeed, insofar as it privileges the masculine relation between the father and his son, Levinas' conception of fecundity—despite positioning itself as ahistorical—continues to find at least part of its sense in a concrete historical situation, that is, in an ideological or patriarchal state of affairs that affirms the ethical priority of masculine relations over and above the ethical *insignificance* of their feminine counterparts. As Eric Severson notes, Levinas' conception of time in *Totality and Infinity* is "partly born out of his understanding of the family", but that understanding, far from remaining neutral with regards to historically determined forms of actuality, not only bears "unfortunate emblems of patriarchal models" but also is "conditioned by various cultural and religious forces to think in particular ways about the feminine."[246] This suggests that Levinas' conception of temporal ethics is not as completely removed from the horizon of history as he would have us believe. Indeed, insofar as it continues to base itself on a familial situation, Levinas' temporal ethics in *Totality and Infinity* remains—*ab initio*—implicated with the history by which the relational significance of familial terms like 'father', 'son', 'mother' and 'daughter' is both configured and distributed.

But at this stage the objection might arise that this argument attaches undue significance

[244] As Sandford (2000: 84) notes: "If in the son the father both remains himself and yet becomes other than himself, how much more true is this of the mother's relation to the child when there is, at one level, a sharing of subsistence if not substance such that the child is *of* the mother."
[245] Sandford, 1998: 16 (emphasis added).
[246] Severson, 2013: 169, 173.

to Levinas' *merely metaphorical* use of the notion of fecundity. Should Levinas' assertions that fecundity is *not* biological not alert us to the fact that this condition for ethics finds no necessary referent in "the empirical presence of a human being of the masculine sex"?[247] In this sense, is fecundity not simply a "metaphor" (as Levinas himself calls it) that refers *not* to an actual or empirical father-son relation, but to the more general phenomenon of "seeing the possibilities of the other as your own possibilities, of being able to escape the closure of your own identity"?[248] Under this more general—or metaphorical—definition, can fecundity not arise in the relation between the mother "and the daughter *too*", as Levinas himself explicitly indicates in a late interview with François Poirié?[249] It is perhaps true that if one takes this wider, metaphorical sense of fecundity, then that concept could perhaps also describe the rupture in being that arises in the relation between a mother and her daughter. However, as Robert Manning notes, this does not alter the fact that in *Totality and Infinity* Levinas continues to deploy the patriarchal language of masculine privilege to describe the ontological condition of fecundity.[250] More crucially from our perspective in this chapter, this wider definition would also not do away with the fact that, *as familial*, a mother-daughter type fecundity would remain immersed in a particular history. Indeed, even if fecundity described the ontological opening that is effected in the relation between a mother and her daughter, it would still refer, as a condition for temporal ethics, to the history by which the ethical significance of those two subject positions are determined and configured. To be sure, this history would perhaps not be the *patriarchal* history that Levinas' conception—as it stands—continues to rely upon for its sense and direction. But even as a mother-daughter relation, fecundity would remain dependent on *a* history, for as Deleuze and Guattari insist in *Anti-Oedipus*, the subject positions of 'mother' and 'daughter', as much as those of 'father' and 'son', remain implicated, or "directly coupled to, the elements of [their surrounding] political

[247] Chanter, 1998: 47. For a direct response to Chanter's argument here, see: Manning, 1991: 138-140.
[248] Levinas, 1985: 70.
[249] Levinas in Poiré, 1987: 107 (emphasis added).
[250] Manning, 1991: 139.

and historical situation".[251] Metaphorical or not, so long as fecundity remains a familial situation, it will continue to have its anchoring point in an empirical history that partly determines the content and significance of the familial terms that it deploys.

Where, then, does this leave Derrida's analysis of Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics"? In a certain sense, Derrida is of course correct to insist that Levinas' temporal ethics in *Totality and Infinity* remains caught up in the order of history—that metaphysics is history. However, *pace* Derrida, this immersion in the historical is not simply, or not exclusively, a question of *language*. It is not exclusively because Levinas' temporal ethics privileges discourse or language as its central modality that the problem of history inscribes itself—as a kind of *formal necessity*—within it. The problem of history also inscribes itself on Levinas' temporal ethics because that ethics continues to premise itself on what can only be seen as a *concrete historical condition*: the familial situation of fecundity. Indeed, if, as Deleuze and Guattari show, the family is nothing but a historically defined complex, and if Levinas' ethics of the face continues to find its condition of the concrete familial relation between the father and his son (fecundity), then that ethics does—Levinas' claims to the contrary notwithstanding—remain caught up and *rooted* in the order of history. Far from referring to horizons beyond the historical, Levinasian temporal ethics thus continues to find its sense and condition in a concrete historical situation. And if that implication with history attaches the possibility of violence to Levinas' temporal ethics, then this violence is not simply, or not exclusively, as Manning notes, "Derrida's anonymous violence of language itself."[252] It is a violence that derives from Levinas' choice to ground his temporal ethics in a historically determined, patriarchal state of affairs whilst *simultaneously* disavowing the determinant role that such a state of affairs plays in his ethics. In this sense, if Derrida is right to insist that there is a certain violence to Levinas' temporal ethics—that time is violence—then once again, *pace* Derrida, this is not simply, or not exclusively, because that ethics privileges a language that is necessarily visual and spatial—as is all language 'in general'. That violence

[251] AO 97.
[252] Manning, 1991: 140.

also derives, *in concreto*, from Levinas' decision to ground his temporal ethics in an actual historical situation (without the simultaneous recognition that this situation is, properly speaking, historical).

3.4. Conclusion: beyond fecundity

I have argued in this chapter that Levinas' temporal ethics in *Totality and Infinity* remains constitutively implicated with the historical. Though Levinas' ethical framework certainly distances itself from Bergson's emphasis on the intuition, because it thinks an immediate ethical relation to novelty on the basis of the ontological category of fecundity, it continues (like Bergson's ethics) to receive part of its essential sense from a concrete historical situation. Indeed, far from uprooting ethics from history and the violence the latter entails, insofar as it remains premised on the ontological relation between a father and his son, Levinas' temporal ethics not only remains constitutively implicated with history, but also remains *complicit* with the violence (towards the feminine) which that history, in its Western manifestation, has traditionally involved.

In this sense, I suggest, the temporal ethics of *Totality and Infinity* cannot quite fulfil its promise of formulating a successful 'resolution' to the problem of history that makes an apparition in Bergson's ethical philosophy. Indeed, far from dispelling that problem, Levinas' temporal ethics in that text merely convokes it anew. To be sure, the problem has here changed shape somewhat: it no longer refers to the intuition's constitutive implication with those historical systems of knowledge that have traditionally done violence to the novelty of time (*qua* duration), but refers instead to the constitutive implication of an immediate ethical relation with that history that has traditionally done violence to the novelty of time (*qua* feminine Other). In both cases, however, a constitutive implication with history presents a problem that neither Bergson nor Levinas have quite been able to resolve: the problem, that is, of showing how an immediate temporal ethics can become strategically *dissociated* from its tendency to remain complicit, or to replicate, those dangers and violence that can be

associated with the historical.

Now, perhaps, Levinas could have avoided re-invoking the problem of history by grounding his conception of temporal ethics on something *other* than the metaphorics of fecundity. And as we know, this is precisely one of the decisive shifts that occur between the publication of *Totality and Infinity* and Levinas' second major work, *Otherwise than Being*. Indeed, in the latter text, we not only see Levinas significantly revise his conception of language in response to Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics"; we also see Levinas develop a more thoroughly 'ethical' (that is, less ontological) grounding for his temporal ethics that no longer relies on the problematic notion of fecundity. With these revisions, Levinas claims he can *now* truly offer an immediate conception of temporal ethics that is in no way recuperable by the presence of history.[253] But once again, how credible are Levinas' assertions on these points? How far does *Otherwise than Being* truly remove itself from the problem of history? These are the questions the next chapter will consider.

[253] OB 18.

4. Levinas II: the anarchic temporal ethics of *Otherwise than Being*

Having explored the temporal ethics of *Totality and Infinity*, in this chapter, I want to turn my attention to Levinas' second major work, *Otherwise than Being*, to consider to what extent it offers a more promising resolution to the problem of history that persisted in the earlier text. As is well known, *Otherwise than Being* revises many of the central themes of *Totality and Infinity*. Specifically, Levinas now drops much of "the ontological language" that still pervaded the earlier work.[1] Conceptually, this abandonment of ontological language is cashed out in two ways. First, *Otherwise than Being* develops a more nuanced conception of language. Language is no longer simply equated with expression, but is itself split into the dimension of "the said [*le dit*]" and "the saying [*le dire*]", where the former refers to the articulations of the presence, simultaneity, and history that occur within traditional conceptuality and syntax, and the latter—saying—signifies the ethical *interruption* of all the modalities of the said.[2] Secondly, where *Totality and Infinity* had spoken of fecundity as one of the ontological conditions for the ethical relation to the Other, Levinas now holds that this condition for ethics must itself be given a wholly *ethical* explanation; it must refer to the fissuring of subjectivity that takes place, as it were, *wholly* before or otherwise than being and its history.

In line with this broad turn away from ontology, Levinas now also argues that an ethical relation to the temporality of the Other is best framed in terms of the notion of *proximity*. This account of proximity, as this chapter's first section will show, somewhat shifts the focus away from the *futurity* that was taken as being expressed by the Other's face in *Totality and Infinity*.[3] Levinas now argues that in proximity, the subject becomes radically exposed to the

[1] For Levinas' own view of the difference between the two texts, see: Levinas, 1990: 295; Levinas et. al., 1988: 170-171.
[2] For more on Levinas' changing conception of language, see: Llewelyn, 2004: 119-138; Wyschogrod, 2004: 188-205.
[3] Levinas now speaks more of an anarchic past than of futurity in relation to the Other. That said, this change in focus should not be overemphasised, since for Levinas the anarchic past remains, in the ethical relation of proximity, precisely equated with futurity: "Proximity (…) opens the distance of a diachrony without a common present, where difference is the past that cannot be caught up with, an unimaginable future". OB 89;

face as the "trace of an immemorial past", to the trace, that is, of a past that was never present and that no order, synchronicity or memory is ever capable of recapturing.[4] It is this anarchic dimension of proximity that now constitutes the ethical relation wherein the subject is exposed to a temporality that is not its own: the unforeseeable temporality of the Other. And once again, Levinas tells us that this ethical relation is by no means reducible to the temporality of history. Proximity, Levinas argues, places the subject in relation with a "non-historical, non-said time, which cannot be synchronised in a present by memory and historiography".[5]

In conjunction with this new focus on proximity, as section two will show, *Otherwise than Being* also drops all mention of fecundity, choosing instead to frame the condition for proximity in terms of the *wholly ethical* notion of *substitution*. Substitution, for Levinas, is the ethical process whereby the subject's "pre-originary *susceptiveness*" to the Other is formulated.[6] In other words, substitution is that process—wholly beyond being and history—where the subject becomes constituted *as* predisposed to the radical temporality of the Other in proximity. Far from being grounded on the ontological relation between a father and his son, the ethical relation now takes as its 'basis' this ethical process that is wholly beyond ontology and history.[7]

Given that it displaces an emphasis on the ontological relation of fecundity—a relation that, as the last chapter argued, must be taken as *historical*—it would seem that *Otherwise than Being*, more so than *Totality and Infinity*, has the potential to liberate Levinas' temporal ethics from any implication with history. This reading would certainly find support in Levinas' repeated assertions that his model of temporal ethics in that text truly effectuates a "break with being and history."[8] However, as I argue in this chapter's third section, while it cannot

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On this connection between the immemorial past and the future in Levinas' late thought, see also: Levinas, 1987a: 111-116.

[4] OB 97.
[5] OB 89.
[6] OB 122.
[7] OB 19.
[8] OB 18.

be denied that Levinas provides a new 'basis' for his temporal ethics, it is less credible to assert that this ethics is now *wholly* removed from the historical. The issue, as I conceive it, is that despite turning away from the language of fecundity, Levinas continues to frame his temporal ethics in terms of a series of gendered terms (like maternity, fraternity and illeity) that speak *precisely* to the implication of his ethics with the historical. Once again with the help of Derrida, I argue that Levinas' temporal ethics in *Otherwise than Being* continues to bear a trace of that patriarchal history that provides some of the sense for Levinas' emphasis on fecundity in *Totality and Infinity*. In this way, I contend that far from finding itself *wholly* beyond history, Levinas' temporal ethics in *Otherwise than Being* continues to find itself contaminated by it at its most constitutive level. But once again, like in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas refuses to accept this constitutive contamination between ethics and the historical. And in this particular sense, I conclude this chapter by saying, Levinas' temporal ethics shows itself as no more capable than Bergson's philosophy of providing an adequate resolution to the problem of history.

4.1. Time beyond being: language and proximity

Among the principal innovations of *Otherwise than Being* is its abandonment of the classical phenomenological structure of *Totality and Infinity*.[9] Where the earlier text sought to expound its temporal ethics by strata—that is, by beginning with the description of the I's individuation in interiority, before proceeding to describe the ethical temporality of the face and, finally, examining its grounding in a realm beyond the face—the order of presentation of the later text is both more diffuse and less clearly structured. Rather than clearly presenting it, *Otherwise than Being* "coils" around its central problematic of "exposing" subjectivity as the fundamental locus of an interruption of being.[10] At critical junctures, the subsequent text also drops the descriptive neutrality of *Totality and Infinity* by engaging in explicit

[9] Cohen, 1998: xxi.
[10] OB: 14.

thematisations about what it means for a philosophical work to claim to break with the encompassing power of linguistic closure—or what Levinas calls the event of being—from *within* language.[11] As Critchley notes, these stylistic changes are not insignificant.[12] Indeed, in many ways, they reflect Levinas' continued commitment to ethically breaking with the orders of visibility and phenomenality *whilst* responding to Derrida's reservations regarding philosophy's ability to achieve such an opening through the traditional medium of discourse.[13]

Levinas begins this attempt to think the opening of ethics by introducing a distinction between "the saying [*le dire*]" and "the said [*le dit*]".[14] As he explains this distinction, the saying is that ethical excess, or remainder, which of necessity refuses to be contained by any linguistic proposition or statement that operates at the level of monstration or of truth and falsity.[15] This latter level, or this modality of language where things are adequate to their representation, is what Levinas calls the said; it is the dimension of language where an entity becomes "fixed, assembled in a tale, is synchronised, presented, lends itself to a noun, receives a title."[16] The said is "not simply a sign or an expression of a meaning", but is rather the linguistic site where entities and things become identified and comparable: the said "proclaims and establishes this as that."[17] In other words, the said is the plane of language in which not only identification but also essence become established through techniques such as naming and apophansis: "Essence is not only conveyed in the said, is not only 'expressed' in it, but originally—though amphibologically—resounds in it qua essence."[18] In the said, entities are not only "illuminated in the memorable time of essence", but their *being*

[11] *Totality and Infinity* also engages in this explicit reflection on its own language (cf. TI 81, 271-2, 295), but this multiplied in *Otherwise than Being*. cf. OB 6, 155, 167, 179, 185.
[12] Critchley, 2014: 129.
[13] For an insightful account of the relationship between *Otherwise than Being* and Derrida's work, see: Bernasconi, 1991: 149-161.
[14] "We will try, with the notion of the saying without the said, to expose such a modality of the subjective, an *otherwise than being*." OB 26.
[15] OB 23.
[16] OB 42.
[17] OB 35.
[18] OB 39.

is also thereby upheld as "the very resonance of being".[19] And it is in this sense, Levinas maintains, that language can be conceived (*qua* said) as a system of identification, designation and, more importantly, history.[20] In visibility and manifestation of the said, entities manifest themselves as historical, they "become history [*se font histoire*], are delivered over to writing, in which the time or narrative, without being reversed, recommences. They become states of affairs".[21]

But language also contains another dimension that is irreducible to the temporality of essence and history in the said.[22] Indeed, according to Levinas, if Western philosophy has hitherto contented itself with operating at the level of the said, there is also "behind being and its monstration (…) [the] resonance of other significations, which now solicit our inquiry."[23] This alternative signification beyond being—or "signifyingness itself"—Levinas calls the saying.[24] This saying cannot, unlike the said, be entirely reduced to the play of essence or being: "Signification, saying (…) cannot be understood as a modality of being."[25] Instead, the saying is to be described as the "primordial enigma" of language that escapes the epos of both essence and being.[26] It is the "irreducible disturbance [*dérangement*]" of language that refuses to be contained by the synchronicity or simultaneity of essence and history in the said.[27] Understood as an "immemorial, pre-historical" disturbance that is "antecedent to the said", the saying constitutes what Levinas calls the *diachrony* of language: "It is the impossibility of the dispersion of time to assemble itself in the present, the

[19] OB 40.
[20] OB 46.
[21] OB 42. On these points, see also Levinas' 1972 essay on "Meaning and Sense": MSe 79-90, also translated in Levinas, 2003a: 13-25.
[22] Levinas gives the name "temporalisation" to this temporality of essence, being, and history. "In the temporalisation of time (….) in which, thanks to retention, memory and history, nothing is lost, everything is presented or represented, everything is consigned and lends itself to inscription, or is synthesized or, as Heidegger would say, assembled (…) without time lost, without time to lose, and where the being of substance comes to pass." OB 9, cf. 39-51.
[23] OB 38.
[24] OB 67.
[25] OB 14.
[26] Borrowing its Greek etymology, Levinas uses the term "enigma" to designate the obscurity, invisibility and riddle of the saying. cf. Levinas, 1987d: 66n.
[27] Levinas, 1987d: 65.

insurmountable diachrony of time, a beyond the said."[28] This means that the saying is the "refusal of conjunction" or "the non-totalisable" within language itself.[29] The saying is a "non-historical, non-said time" that always comes to *fissure* the temporal stability of the said, without every finding itself wholly captured by the said's drive to assemble all things into a memory and history.[30] Indeed, as the rupture or diachrony that is 'antecedent' to the said, the saying never finds itself entirely encapsulated by the synchronisation that the latter—as a historically constituted system of language—performs.[31] Saying is that anarchic temporal *lapse* that always repudiates the assembled or historical time of the said.[32]

Under this conceptual backdrop, one of the central questions that *Otherwise than Being* asks itself is how the saying can be made to resonate in thought given that much of Western philosophy already appears, historically, to take place at the level of the said.[33] "Phenomenality, the exhibition of being's essence in truth, is a permanent presupposition of the philosophical tradition of the West."[34] How, then, can we speak of a saying that is beyond or antecedent to the said? For Levinas, it would not be possible to speak of "the *beyond essence* if this history of the West did not bear, in its margins, the trace of events carrying another signification".[35] However, it cannot be the case that this trace simply 'shows' itself in the said, for that exposition would "still give an ontological said, in the measure that all monstration exposes an essence."[36] Instead, Levinas contends, the "echo of the *otherwise*" can be heard in thought only through a "reduction" whereby the saying is "extracted" from the said in which it always already leaves its mark as an otherwise.[37] As Levinas explains, this reduction is in one sense not unlike that of Husserlian phenomenology,

[28] OB 38, 46.
[29] OB 11.
[30] OB 89.
[31] Levinas, 1987a: 109.
[32] OB 51.
[33] OB 24.
[34] OB 132.
[35] OB 178. In the passage quoted, Levinas is not specifically referring to the history of Western philosophy, but to the "European history [that] itself has been the conquest and jealous defense" of that philosophy's predominant tendency to remain "at home [with itself] in saying [only] being". On these points, see also: Levinas, 1994b: 13-33.
[36] OB 44; cf. Levinas, 1986: 356.
[37] OB 7, 44.

"insofar as it signifies the locating of notions in the horizon of their appearing, a horizon unrecognised, forgotten or displaced in the exhibition of an object."[38] In contrast to Husserlian phenomenology, however, Levinas' reduction does not direct its attention to a structure or "mode of being showing itself in a theme."[39] Instead, that reduction directs itself to the saying that can never be described or captured in the manifestation and visibility of the said: "the reduction is reduction of the said to the saying beyond the logos, beyond being and non-beyond, beyond essence, beyond true and non-true."[40] This reduction does, to be sure, still require the presence of the said, since "one can go back to [the saying] through reduction only of what shows itself."[41] But this is not to attribute a priority to the said over the saying, for, properly speaking, the saying is always *prior* to the said and its history.[42] Neither is the 'result' of the reduction to be equated with the order of the said. Indeed, in reality, what the reduction 'uncovers' is that ethical modality where it is the *saying* that determines the ultimate meaning and significance of the said, where "saying states and thematises the said (…) with a signification that has to be distinguished from that borne by words in the said."[43] What the reduction 'finds' by reducing the saying from the said is a notion of subjectivity that functions as "the ethical interruption of essence."[44]

This ethical interruption of essence that is uncovered by the reduction is what Levinas terms "proximity".[45] Proximity is a relation with the other that "is quite distinct from every other relationship, and has to be conceived as a responsibility for the other; it might be called humanity, or subjectivity".[46] This proximity cannot be described as the cognition of another, since in knowing the primordial contact with alterity signified by proximity is already

[38] OB 183. Levinas elsewhere equates Husserl's reduction with an attempt to find a notion of sense that is "independent" and "'prior to' history and culture". MSe 101.
[39] OB 183.
[40] OB 45.
[41] OB 44.
[42] OB 43.
[43] OB 46.
[44] OB 44.
[45] Levinas describes the relation between the reduction and proximity as follows: "one has to go back from this reflection [of the saying in the said] to the diachrony itself, which is the one-for-the-other in proximity." OB 67.
[46] OB 46.

"in a certain sense an abstraction."[47] In knowing, "being shows itself to itself", and contact is still posited on the basis of a solitary for-itself.[48] But for Levinas, proximity, *qua* responsibility, cannot be reduced to this play of being, to this play of the for-itself.[49] Responsibility is not cognition but *exposure*.[50] But again, this exposure is not simply the susceptibility to being of a "subject complacent in itself and positing itself for itself."[51] Instead, proximity must be understood as the immediate exposedness to *another* that functions even 'before' the ego's self-enjoyment of the elemental. Properly speaking, even this egoistic enjoyment already bears the trace of alterity, such that there can be no worldly immediacy that is not always already responsibility or proximity for-the-other.[52] Hence, if *Totality and Infinity* speaks of the face-to-face encounter as the immediate, in *Otherwise than Being* the face's immediacy now carries the additional sense of a proximity that is prior even to the I's natural identification with itself: "the *immediacy* of the other [*autre*], more immediate still than immediate identity in its quietude as a nature—the immediacy of proximity."[53] As an immediate relation, proximity is the "extreme exposure to the assignation of [responsibility] by the other" that functions, as it were, even *before* the subject's representations of itself and the Other.[54] Indeed, as Levinas puts it: "The obligation aroused by the proximity of the neighbour is not to the measure of the images he gives me; it concerns me before or otherwise."[55]

The immediacy of proximity is also not reducible to spatiality and its associated modality of vision.[56] Indeed, for Levinas, to conceive proximity as the spatial or visible distance between two beings is to attribute to it a merely derivative meaning in relation to a system of

[47] OB 64. Unlike *Totality and Infinity*, which, as the last chapter noted, opposes the immediacy of the face-to-face to contact, *Otherwise than Being* frames proximity as a "contact with the other" (86). But this is not a return to Bergson's definition of intuition as immediacy *qua* contact: "Intuition, which has been opposed to a concept, is already the sensible conceptualised", and in this sense, Levinas claims, "[intuition] will thereby have lost the immediacy of contact." OB 63, 116.
[48] OB 103.
[49] OB 68. Proximity is not a "nearness of Being. Man is [not] the neighbour of Being", as Heidegger (1993: 245) would have it.
[50] "Exposedness is the one-in-responsibility". OB 56.
[51] OB 64.
[52] OB 72-74.
[53] OB 84.
[54] OB 145. Similarly: "A face is an anachronous immediacy more tense than that of an image offered in the straightforwardness of an intuitive intention." OB 91.
[55] OB 89.
[56] Levinas, 1987a: 116.

simultaneity and "absolute coexistence."[57] We should thus not speak of proximity as a spatial contiguity, but rather as a relation of "*disparity* [*disparité*]" between same and Other where "nothing can be conceived as a correlation, that is, as a synchronisation of a temporal succession, whose losses would be recuperated."[58] For Levinas,

> It is then not enough to speak of proximity as a relationship between two terms, and as a relationship assured of the simultaneity of these terms. It is necessary to emphasise the breakup of this synchrony, of this whole, by the difference between the same and the other in the non-indifference of the obsession exercised by the other [*Autre*] over the same.[59]

For proximity to retain its status as an ethical interruption, it must be conceived as the *obsession* of the same by the Other. But this obsession does not consist of the "reciprocity of handshakes, caresses, struggle, collaboration, commerce or conversation."[60] Indeed, the same is obsessed by the other precisely to the extent that it is passively affected by alterity *prior to* its encounter with any actual Other.[61] There is a *radical passivity* involved in the obsession of proximity, a passivity that is radical because it is 'older' and even "more passive" than the sensible receptivity that the history of philosophy has hitherto taken as the ultimate model of passivity.[62] As Levinas puts it, "the neighbour concerns me before all assumption, all commitment consented to or refused. (…) I am bound to him before any liaison contracted. He orders me before being recognised."[63] Passive obsession therefore occurs before any agreement; it occurs even before the subject is fully present to itself.[64] In the passivity of proximity, the same is thus "as it were ordered from the outside, traumatically commanded, without interiorising by representation and concepts the authority that

[57] OB 81.
[58] OB 90, 192n29. In the next chapter, we will also see Deleuze speak of temporal ethics as involving a dimension of disparity that is irreducible to space.
[59] OB 85.
[60] OB 83.
[61] OB 84, 89; Bernasconi, 2002: 242.
[62] OB 48. Levinas's conception of radical passivity targets Kant's (1998: B153/B154) insistence that the *a priori* receptivity of inner sense (sensibility) adequately captures what is distinctive about the "passive subject". For Levinas, the passivity of proximity remains closely related to a notion of subjectivity, but *as* obsessional, that passivity remains prior even to the *a priori* forms or conditions of possibility of experience of which Kant speaks. cf. OB 71, 122, 164. For more on these points, see also: Hofmeyr, 2009: 21-23; Wall, 1999: 31-65, 156-152.
[63] OB 87.
[64] OB 86.

commands [it]."[65]

This obsessional nature of proximity signifies not only its difference from spatiality but also its irreducibility to the synchrony of the present. As Levinas explains, since in proximity alterity affects the same before all commitment and before all recognition, its temporality is never that of the said: "The neighbour strikes me before striking me, as though I had heard before he spoke. This anachronism attests to a temporality different from that which scans consciousness."[66] In proximity, the subject is exposed to a temporality that is other than that which proceeds by the modalities of identification, presence and simultaneity. Since the obsessive responsibility aroused in proximity is never contracted *into*, proximity can only be described as a "signification irreducible to the presents and presences, different from the present."[67] Rather than being the meeting point between well-identified things and beings, proximity is thus a relation with temporality which "concerns me before or otherwise" than being and its presence to itself.[68] Indeed, proximity is precisely that rupture, disturbance or saying that always comes to fissure the time of the said: "The proximity does not enter into the common time of clocks, which makes meetings possible. It is a disturbance. (….) Proximity is a disturbance of the rememberable time."[69] As the obsession that orders the subject before any recognition and accord, proximity is thus the ethical relation where the subject finds itself affected by a temporality that is never its own. But this temporality never affects the subject in the manner of a past present.[70] The temporality of proximity always affects the subject "as though from an immemorial past, which was never present."[71] The traumatic obsession and exposure of proximity cannot therefore be located in a former time, epoch of principle. The temporality of proximity is *an-archic*: it designates the way in which the subject finds itself affected by another's time without that affection having a

[65] OB 87.
[66] OB 88.
[67] OB 94.
[68] OB 89.
[69] OB 89.
[70] OB 75.
[71] OB 88.

rememberable or identifiable origin as its governing principle.[72] But this anarchy, Levinas contends, is not simply the absence of order, just as it does not merely designate another order.[73] The anarchy of proximity "troubles being over and beyond these alternatives. It brings to a halt the ontological play which, precisely qua play, is consciousness, where being is lost and found again, and thus illuminated."[74] As the anarchical obsession of the Other, proximity constitutes an ethical relation where the subject finds itself affected by a temporality that is *wholly beyond* or *otherwise than* being and its play. To that extent, Levinas argues, we can speak of proximity as that ethical relation which "opens [*ouvre*] the distance of a diachrony without a common present".[75]

By taking shape as an ethical relation that goes wholly beyond the present, proximity is ultimately also irreducible to the temporality of history. Because it does not devolve from a commitment that the subject has entered into in 'its' past, Levinas argues, the relation of proximity not only "exceeds every actual [*actuel*] or represented present."[76] Ultimately, because proximity also places the subject into contact with an alterity that is essentially *unrepresentable*, proximity also signifies that relation whereby the subject is opened to an anachronous temporality that "takes apart the recuperable time of history and memory in which representation continues."[77] The relation with alterity that the subject enters into in proximity is therefore not only "unconvertible into history".[78] More accurately, proximity can even be described as the ethical relation whereby the subject irrevocably goes beyond—or breaks with—the time of history:

> One can call that apocalyptically the break-up of time. But [proximity] is a matter of an effaced but untameable diachrony of non-historical, non-said time, which cannot be synchronised in a present

[72] OB 82, 97.
[73] Levinas resists Bergson's arguments in *Creative Evolution* (CE 240-258) that an apparent disorder in being is simply another order (that is simply not recognised as such) and thus still being. OB 101, 194n3.
[74] OB 101.
[75] OB 89, 100.
[76] OB 51.
[77] Levinas, 1987a: 116; OB 89.
[78] OB 166.

by memory and historiography (….) Such is the sense of the non-phenomenality of the face.[79]

In this way, though proximity carries additional significations that might at first sight appear historical (such as the signification of fraternity), its ultimate sense always derives from an anachronic temporality that "no present, no historiography, could assemble".[80] Indeed, even though in proximity the subject finds itself affected by the Other as its *brother* ("The neighbour is a brother"), the ethical sense of that fraternity can never be explained with reference to the presumed unity between subjects that is postulated—for political purposes—in certain historical contexts or systems.[81] "Proximity is fraternity", but this "human fraternity [is] outside of any preestablished system."[82] This means that fraternity in proximity does not refer to the shared immersion of the brothers within a historical field of "society, the State and its institutions, exchanges and work".[83] In its "absolute and proper meaning", fraternity can be understood only in terms of the subject's exposure to the anachronic temporality of the Other.[84] But again, this exposure remains irreducible to the passing of the present in a given historical context.[85] Indeed, if anything, for Levinas, it is the historical world and its presence that is "comprehensible out of [the fraternity] of proximity."[86]

Although *Otherwise than Being* introduces a range of concepts—like proximity and the saying—that exceed the temporal ethics of *Totality and Infinity*, in their orientation to history the two texts therefore remain fundamentally aligned. The sense of temporal ethics as a movement towards the irreducible temporality of the Other, Levinas continues to claim, "is not a 'sense of history' (…), for the irresistible orientation of history already makes meaningless the very fact of the movement, since the Other would already be inscribed in

[79] OB 89.
[80] OB 93.
[81] OB 87. "The unity of the human race is in fact posterior to fraternity." OB 166.
[82] OB 139, 97.
[83] OB 159. The fraternity of proximity is also not biological: "Here there is a relation of kinship outside of all biology, 'against all logic.'" OB 87.
[84] OB 81.
[85] OB 140.
[86] OB 159. Or, as Levinas writes in "Meaning and Sense": "the norms of morality are not embarked in history and culture. They are not even islands that emerge from it—for they make all meaning, even cultural meaning possible, and make it possible to judge cultures." MSe 101-102, cf. 95.

the Same, the end in the beginning."[87] On this score, the only significant difference that emerges between the two texts concerns the *way* in which the Other's face signifies an irreducible temporality beyond history *to* the same. As well as being understood in terms of the obsessional nature of proximity, Levinas tells us, the face should now be taken as absolute with regard to history not just because it *expresses* itself, but also, or rather, because the "face is *trace* of itself."[88] As Levinas explains in "Meaning and Sense", for the face to be a trace of itself is for it to signify the absolutely other in a way that is not simply a "modulation" of the being, presence, and history of entities.[89] "A trace", Levinas writes, "is a presence of that which properly speaking has never been there, of what is always past."[90] In this sense, the trace of the face should not be confused with the material vestiges that a historian discovers in the ancient civilizations that form the horizon of present society.[91] That kind of material vestige, though ancient, still has its place in the order of the world; it still refers to a preceding actuality.[92] "But a real trace", like that of the face, "disturbs the order of the world."[93] And it does so because it "does not simply lead to the past, but is [rather] the very *passing* toward a past more remote than any past and any future which are still set in my time—the past of the other (…) an absolute past which unites all times."[94] That is to say that the trace is the enigmatic *way*—beyond being and essence—in which the face in proximity gives the infinite temporality of the Other (saying) to the subject.[95] But though the face's way of giving this temporality is enigmatic, this enigma "does not signify an

[87] MSe 91, cf. 95; OB 91.
[88] OB 91 (emphasis added). The concept of expression is not entirely absent from *Otherwise than Being*, but its presence is relatively subdued, and when it does appear, it is usually configured as the "expression of exposure" (OB 49, 94, 154). To my knowledge, Levinas does not explicitly explain his reasons for this move, but it is possible that he came to see the concept as less adequate than the notion of the trace for conveying the sense of the face's irreducible temporality.

This move beyond expression and towards the trace is also replayed in some of Levinas' other works around the publication of *Otherwise than Being*. In "Meaning and Sense", for instance, Levinas writes that the "epiphany of a face, which has enabled us to affirm a sense prior to history, poses a problem to which" the notion of the trace "outline[s] a response." MSe 102.
[89] MSe 105; OB 94.
[90] MSe 106.
[91] MSe 104.
[92] OB 140.
[93] MSe 104.
[94] MSe 106; Levinas, 1986: 358.
[95] OB 162.

indeterminate phenomenon; its ambiguity is not an indetermination".[96] Indeed, according to Levinas, the enigmatic way in which the face gives an irreducible temporality to the subject can be precisely determined as a "He" [*Il*]: "We hear this way to signify—(…) this way of leaving the alternatives of being—under the third-personal pronoun, under the word *He* [*Il*]. The enigma comes to us from Illeity [*Illeité*]."[97] That is to say that the face signifies a temporality beyond being and history because, *as* illeity, it is never simply collapsible into the temporality of those other two modalities.[98] "Illeity (….) indicates a way of concerning me without entering into conjunction with me."[99] For Levinas, it is thus *as* illeity that the face in proximity signifies the temporality of infinity to the subject: "in the trace of illeity, in the enigma, the synchronism falls out of tune, [and] totality is transcended in another time."[100]

In *Otherwise than Being*, the emphasis on illeity thus provides the full sense of the ethical relation to time that is produced in the anarchic "proximity of a face".[101] But as in *Totality and Infinity*, this emphasis by no means *completes* Levinas' conception of temporal ethics. Just as *Totality and Infinity* posited fecundity as the 'basis' for the I's relation to the face's absolute novelty, so too, Levinas claims in *Otherwise than Being*, we must still explain how the obsession of proximity can "take place and have its time in consciousness."[102] Otherwise said, having explained the sense of proximity as the ethical relation that exceeds and interrupts the temporality of history, we must still provide an account of how that relation becomes *possible* for the subject. Yet, and in accordance with *Otherwise than Being*'s general attempt to think ethics *wholly beyond* being, it is clear that the *ontological* category of fecundity can no longer provide this account.[103] For proximity to remain the ethical

[96] OB 94.
[97] Levinas, 1987d: 75.
[98] cf. Sandford, 2000: 77.
[99] OB 12.
[100] Levinas, 1987d: 75; OB 148.
[101] OB 90.
[102] OB 102.
[103] The concept of fecundity is conspicuously absent from *Otherwise than Being*. Indeed, despite the text's liberal use of the metaphor of maternity, it is as though Levinas came to see temporal ethics as requiring *more* than the *ontological* relation between a parent and its child. As a subsequent interview claims: "the proximity of the Other is presented as the fact that the Other is not simply close to me in space, *or close like a parent*, but he approaches me essentially insofar as I feel myself—insofar as I

interruption of essence, Levinas claim, its grounding can no longer be thought in ontological terms. The grounding of proximity must instead receive a *wholly* ethical treatment: "The mode in which a face indicates its own absence in my responsibility requires a description that can be formed only in ethical language."[104] This means, in part, that proximity must be explained by recourse to "the ethical terms accusation, persecution and responsibility for the others."[105] But it also means that insofar as ethics continues to require a subjective *condition*—and for the late Levinas, the infinite does have "glory *only through* subjectivity"—then that subjective condition must *itself* be given an ethical explanation.[106] The I that is the subject of temporal ethics must itself be understood as undergoing an *ethical* (as opposed to an ontological) individuation in responsibility. For as Levinas explicitly warns, "[i]t is only in this way that the absolutely exterior other is near to the point of obsession."[107] But what concept in Levinas' text provides this account of the I's individuation in responsibility? This is what we must now articulate.

4.2. The ethical 'basis' of proximity: substitution

We have seen *Otherwise than Being* describe temporal ethics in terms of the anarchic obsession of proximity, an obsession that is irreducible to the temporality of history and the common sense time of clocks, meetings and the present. We also noted that for Levinas, this ethical relation must ultimately be explained in terms of a notion of subjectivity that no longer retains a 'foothold' in the ontology of being and its essence.[108] Now, in *Otherwise than*

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am—responsible for him." Levinas, 1985: 96 (emphasis added).

[104] OB 94.

[105] OB 121.

[106] OB 148 (emphasis added). With Critchley, I see Levinas ethics in *Otherwise than Being* as requiring a particular conception of the subject. Critchley, 1999: 183-185.

[107] OB 120.

[108] EE 15. Bernasconi (2005: 113, emphasis added) argues that there is a continuity between *Otherwise than Being* and Levinas' earlier attempts to thematise a transcendent escape from being (cf. Levinas, 2003b), suggesting that the former text "still expresses the aspiration to exit being while nevertheless *retaining a foothold there*." While Bernasconi's general claim that Levinas' work as a whole directs itself to a transcendence beyond being is perhaps hard to dispute, his more specific claim that *Otherwise than Being*—specifically, with its account of substitution—still thinks in the mode of 'retaining a foothold in being' is less convincing. This argument flies in the face of Levinas' repeated pronouncements that, as the 'basis' of proximity, substitution is itself "outside of being" and "without

Being, Levinas is much less clear on what concept could play this founding role in his text. That said, Levinas' aforementioned claim that proximity must be explained by a notion of subjectivity that itself has recourse to the ethical terms of *accusation* and *persecution* already provides us some clues. Levinas' insistence on these requirements reveals that "substitution" is the only concept that can play this grounding role in *Otherwise than Being*.[109] Simply stated, substitution is precisely Levinas' attempt to explain how the subject can be "unique and chosen" *as* someone who is both persecuted and accused by the Other—as a hostage.[110] In this sense, substitution provides the explanation *beyond being* of the subject's "entry into the proximity of the neighbour."[111] In Levinas' text, substitution emerges as "the *otherwise than being* at the *basis* [*au fond*] of proximity".[112] But how exactly does substitution play this role?

According to Levinas, we can begin to answer this question by distinguishing substitution from a more traditional account of subjectivity *qua* identification. Philosophy, Levinas contends, has traditionally limited itself to describing subjectivity as an ontological event or adventure whose main figure—the subject—can always, by virtue of its self-possession and certainty, be sure of coinciding with itself.[113] This tendency to think subjectivity solely within the remit of the ontological event of being and its self-coincidence is clearly evident in the philosophies of Hegel and Sartre, both of whom think subjectivity in terms of the power and freedom that a subject can exercise over itself and its world: the *for-itself*.[114] With their respective emphases on the for-itself as the power that the subject possesses for remaining equal to itself and in possession of itself, Levinas argues, both Hegel and Sartre take

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conditions of support". OB 105; cf. S 85.

[109] In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas mostly speaks of persecution and accusation in direct connection with substitution: "Every accusation and persecution (…) presuppose[s] the subjectivity of the ego, substitution" (OB 117). Unsurprisingly, those two terms are most frequently deployed in Chapter IV of the text, which is simply entitled "Substitution".

[110] OB 127.

[111] OB 127.

[112] OB 19 (emphasis on "basis" added). My reading on this point echoes those of other Levinas commentators: Bernasconi, 2002: 234-251; Critchley, 1999: 183-197; Giannopoulos, 2019: 222-229.

[113] OB 99.

[114] S 82. For paradigmatic expositions of Hegel and Sartre's conceptions, see, respectively: Sartre, 1969: 73-218; Hegel, 2018: 102-135.

subjectivity (or the "oneself") to "be reducible to a turning back of *essence* upon itself, a return of essence as both subject and condition of the identification of the Same."[115] But this approach, Levinas tells us, "must be placed into question."[116] It must be questioned in part because it contrasts too strongly with the anarchic relation of proximity: "The obsession we have seen in proximity conflicts with this figure of a being possessing itself in an equality, this being *ἀρχή*."[117] Perhaps more crucially, this approach also fails to grasp what is truly distinctive about the condition of subjectivity: "consciousness, knowing of oneself by oneself, is not all there is to the notion of subjectivity."[118]

At its core, Levinas argues, subjectivity consists not of the subject's self-discovery but of what can be called the "recurrence to oneself."[119] This recurrence, Levinas claims, is something like a *rhythm* or *pulsation* that functions prior to the subject's recognition and consciousness of itself.[120] "The ego is in itself like a sound that would resound in its own echo, the node of a wave which is once again consciousness."[121] But this rhythmic resounding of oneself in recurrence is not, Levinas warns, a melodic line that retains each of its 'moments' in a continuous and harmonious way. "The uncancellable recurrence of the oneself in the subject is prior to any distinction between moments which could present themselves to a synthesising activity of identification and assemblage to recall or expectation."[122] Instead, the recurrence refers to the pulsating *discomfort* that the subject (or the ego, or self) feels in its own skin: "The ego is not in itself like matter, which, perfectly espoused by its form, is what it is; it is in itself like one is in one's skin, that is, already tight, ill at ease in one's skin."[123] In other words, recurrence is the "irritability, susceptibility and exposure to wounds" that incessantly beats, without any rest, as the heart of subjectivity.[124]

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[115] S 84.
[116] S 84.
[117] OB 102.
[118] OB 102. Or: "The identity of the *oneself* is not equivalent to the identity of identification." S 84.
[119] OB 114.
[120] S 84.
[121] OB 103.
[122] OB 104.
[123] OB 108.
[124] OB 107-109.

Recurrence is the pulsation of a vulnerability that shatters or dis-joins the unity and coincidence of the subject with itself.[125] It is the "breakup, fission, [and] openness" of the self to its outside.[126] This openness, Levinas tells us, operates 'before' the time of consciousness and the said: "The oneself comes from a past that could not be remembered, not because it is situated very far behind, but because the oneself, incommensurable with consciousness which is always equal to itself, is not 'made' for the present."[127] Indeed, if anything, what this pre-reflexive recurrence is 'made' for is the "assignation" of the subject with a time that is not its own but the Other's, saying: "The recurrence of ipseity, the incarnation, far from thickening and tumefying the soul, oppresses it and contracts it and exposes it naked to the other to the point of making the subject expose its very exposedness (…) to the point of making it an uncovering of self in saying."[128]

Levinas' claim is that this notion of recurrence "coincides" with the task of explaining the obsession of proximity precisely because it reveals how the subject 'is' always already *accused* by an otherwise than being.[129] Since the assignation of the self in recurrence is like "an attachment that has already been made, [or] something irreversibly past, prior to all memory and recall", the self is always "prior to the play of being."[130] The self is always in contact with—or *accused* by—an otherwise than being because it always bears an attachment to that otherwise simply by virtue of inhabiting its own skin.[131] In its recurrence, the subject is vulnerable and subjected to everything: "It is a being divesting itself, emptying itself of its being, turning itself inside out, and if it can be put thus, the fact of 'otherwise than being.'"[132] And it is for this reason, Levinas contends, that the recurrence of the self is ethically significant:

> The subject is in the accusative, without recourse in being, expelled from being, (…) without a

[125] "Recurrence is but an 'outdoing' of unity.'" OB 108.
[126] OB 107.
[127] OB 107.
[128] OB 109.
[129] OB 110; S 87.
[130] OB 104, 106.
[131] OB 110.
[132] OB 117.

> foundation, reduced to itself, and thus without condition. In its own skin. Not at rest under a form, but tight in its skin, encumbered and as it were stuffed with itself, suffocating under itself, insufficiently open, forced to detach itself from itself, to breathe more deeply, all the way, forced to dispossess itself to the point of losing itself.[133]

In recurrence the self feels uneasy with itself in its own skin, and it is forced, by that very pulsation, to leave or to depart from itself, to become *accused* or *persecuted* by its outside. "The self, the persecuted one, is accused beyond his fault before freedom"[134] That is, in recurrence, the self becomes accused as responsible for the Other even 'before' it can consciously recognise that accusation as its own. And for Levinas, this movement whereby the self becomes persecuted by a responsibility that is otherwise than being is precisely the *ethical event* of substitution.[135] It is the event whereby, *in its own skin*, the self departs from itself not towards being, but towards the Other as a kind of inspiration. In its own skin, the self *substitutes* its coincidence with itself for an ethical contact with the Other: "I exist through the other and for the other, but without this being alienation: I am inspired (….) in the form of incarnation, as being-in-one's-skin, having-the-other-in-one's-skin." [136] The accusation of the otherwise in recurrence is thus the ethical event whereby the self becomes a hostage to the Other, where it replaces or substitutes itself for the Other and becomes, in its skin, already-for-the-other, responsible.[137]

This ethical event of substitution signifies not only the self's persecution by its responsibility for the Other, but also the very fact of its ethical individuation. Indeed, for Levinas, these two aspects of substitution are intricately connected, since, as he explains, the persecution of responsibility cannot be understood as an accident that happens to an already-constituted subject.[138] The self is *already* responsible for the Other in its own skin,

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[133] OB 110.
[134] OB 121.
[135] This event, Levinas warns, is not an act, for that would once again place it within the remit of being. S 91; OB 117.
[136] OB 114-115.
[137] OB 118.
[138] OB 114.

that is, prior to any consciousness or presence.[139] The persecution of responsibility is thus "not something added to the subjectivity of the subject and his vulnerability; it is the very movement of recurrence."[140] Before any consciousness, intentionality or activity, the self already feels itself responsible for the Other in the very tension of its skin: "I have not done anything and I have always been under accusation—persecuted."[141] And according to Levinas, it is also in this movement of recurrence or substitution that the self emerges as an ethically *individuated* subject—that is, as a subject who is "unique and chosen" for ethics.[142] This individuation occurs, Levinas explains, because "it is I, I and no one else, who am a hostage for the others (….) and it is through this substitution that I am not 'another', but me."[143] In other words, it is by feeling the responsibility for others in own its skin that the subject is able to say "me", or "here I am [*me voici*]".[144] But this 'here I am' of substitution, Levinas argues, is not the presence to itself of a subject that remains capable of shutting itself off from the Other's saying; it is not "like the expression of a mute, or the discourse of a stranger shut up in his maternal language [*langue maternelle*]."[145] The 'here I am' is the subjectivity of a subject who is always already turned towards Others: "the 'here I am' signifies me in the name of God, at the service of men [*des hommes*] that look at me."[146] In this way, the accusation or persecution of the self in substitution is also the way in which the subject becomes individuated, beyond being, as *ethical*.[147] Because substitution enables the subject to say 'here I am' without having recourse to the *conatus essendi* of beings, it effectuates the ethical "individuation or superindividuation" of the subject.[148] In the recurrence of its own skin, the subject becomes "unique and chosen as a responsibility and

[139] "Concretely," Levinas suggests, "this means to be accused of what others do and to be responsible for what others do." OB 88.
[140] OB 111.
[141] OB 114.
[142] OB 112.
[143] OB 126-127.
[144] "The word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and for everyone." OB 114.
[145] OB 143.
[146] OB 149
[147] "The non-interchangeable par excellence, the I, the unique one, substitutes itself for others. Nothing is a game. Thus being is transcended." OB 117.
[148] OB 118.

a substitution."[149]

And it is as this joint upsurge of the self's responsibility and uniqueness that substitution functions as the 'basis' of proximity. As Levinas puts it: "It is through the condition of being hostage that there can be in the world pity, compassion, pardon and *proximity*—even the little there is, even the simple 'After you, sir.'"[150] It is, in other words, because the self is already in its skin for-others, because it is already a hostage to this substitution, that the Other is able to obsess it and thereby open it to a diachrony without present. Without this substitution, the subject might have found itself in a world where the "imperialism of the ego" would reign.[151] But for Levinas, this world is impossible, since in the very course of its individuation as a self, that self becomes a 'here I am' who is responsible and susceptible to the temporality of the Other.[152] To that extent, substitution can be described as the subject's "assignation to proximity": it is the way in which the subject is compelled, according to an individuating susception that cannot be assumed, to approach the neighbour and to thereby undergo the opening of proximity.[153] "It is only in this way", that is, on the basis of substitution, "that the absolutely exterior other is near to the point of obsession. Here there is proximity"—or, we might add, temporal ethics.[154] Substitution is, in other words, the ethical basis in subjectivity for the opening of temporal ethics itself:

> It is with subjectivity understood as a self, with the exciding and dispossession, the contraction, in which the ego does not appear, but immolates itself, that the relationship with the other can be communication and transcendence, and not always another way of seeking certainty, or the coinciding with oneself.[155]

But significantly, this opening is no longer entered into on the basis of ontological categories, as it was in *Totality and Infinity*.[156] Indeed, if substitution is, as Levinas claims, "my entry into

[149] OB 124.
[150] OB 117 (emphasis added).
[151] OB 128.
[152] OB 126.
[153] OB 122-123.
[154] OB 120.
[155] OB 118.
[156] In substitution, Levinas argues, "the overdetermination of ontological categories is visible, which

the proximity of the neighbour", then this entry is itself ethical.[157] Substitution is an entry into temporal ethics that is no way reducible—or that no longer belongs—to the structures and systems that Western thought usually seeks as a "sure harbour" for its reflections.[158]

But if *Otherwise than Being* departs from *Totality and Infinity* in its theorisation of the condition for ethics, on that same point, the two texts remain aligned in one crucial sense. For if substitution is not exactly equivalent to the dead time of fecundity, to the relation between a father and his son, it remains—like that ontological category—essentially irreducible to the temporality of *history*.[159] Indeed, as the 'here I am' that is entirely beyond being, Levinas argues, substitution is also removed from, or outside, the historical: "the I is itself, [and] does not belong to Being or history".[160] This means that when Levinas speaks of the I's ethical individuation and accusation in substitution, we should not read these as events that in any way reflect the sense and order of history.

> These are not events that happen to an empirical ego, that is, to an ego already posited and fully identified, as a trial that would lead it to being more conscious of itself, and make it more apt to put itself in the place of others. What we are here calling oneself, or other in the same, where inspiration arouses respiration, the very pneuma of the psyche, precedes this empirical order, which is a part of being, of the universe, of the State, and is already conditioned in a system.[161]

Properly speaking, the recurrence of the self, or substitution, can be classified only as a "'prehistory' [*'préhistoire'*]", since it refers to a dimension of subjectivity that is prior to any empirical dimension, prior to any actuality.[162] Indeed: "The upsurge of the oneself in persecution, the anarchic passivity of substitution, is not some event whose history we might recount but a conjunction which describes the ego."[163] As such, though substitution carries

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transforms them into ethical terms." OB 115.
[157] OB 127.
[158] OB 136.
[159] Levinas does once in passing speak of substitution as a "dead time", but he does not explain how this dead time differs from that of fecundity. OB 109.
[160] OB 195n11. In line with *Totality and Infinity's* classification of fecundity, Levinas also argues that substitution's "concept of the incarnate subject is not biological." OB 109.
[161] OB 115-116.
[162] OB 117.
[163] S 90.

some significations that might at first glance appear historical—like that of *maternity*, which for Levinas "suggests to us the proper sense of the oneself", or "the ultimate sense of [the] vulnerability" of substitution—these significations by no means belong to the domain of history.[164] Maternity here refers not to the historically defined relation between a mother and her child, nor even to the natural aspect of that relation, but simply to the *bearing* of responsibility for the Other that the subject undergoes, prior to any history, in substitution: "In maternity what signifies is a responsibility for others, to the point of substitution for others and suffering from both the effect of persecution and from the persecution itself in which the persecutor sinks. Maternity, which is bearing par excellence, bears even responsibility for the persecuting by the persecutor."[165] In this sense, if maternity provides an *apt metaphor* for the ethical event of substitution that conditions temporal ethics, that metaphor, Levinas claims, also bears no reference or reflection to any historically defined complex.[166] "Whatever be its psychological, social, or philological history, the *beyond* which a metaphor produces has a sense that transcends this history."[167] Thus, temporal ethics, or the exposure to the illeity of the face in proximity, as a relation that is grounded in the ethical event of substitution, remains, for Levinas, not only wholly otherwise than being, but also *wholly otherwise than history*.

4.3. History at the basis of proximity

We have noted that *Otherwise than Being* conceives temporal ethics in different terms than *Totality and Infinity*. In distinction to the earlier emphasis on the face and its expression, the later text conceives temporal ethics in terms of the anarchic trace of illeity (or saying) that the face leaves on the subject in the obsessional dimension of proximity. This ethical relation, moreover, is no longer made possible by the ontological relation between a father

[164] OB 104, 108, cf. 75-79.
[165] OB 75.
[166] Levinas explicitly proposes a close relation between maternity and metaphoricity: "The evocation of maternity in this metaphor suggests to us the proper sense of the oneself." OB 104.
[167] MSe 99.

and his son, but is rather based on the ethical individuation of the subject in the susceptibility of substitution. As Levinas puts it, the anarchic obsession of the Other in proximity is a command that "only a 'here I am' can answer".[168] But if substitution replaces fecundity as Levinas' proposed basis for temporal ethics, we must also ask whether the former concept is able to overcome all of the latter's problems—particularly as they relate to history. This interrogation is crucial not simply because Levinas—despite continuing to use a range of gendered metaphors (like fraternity and maternity) that might, *prima facie*, suggest an involvement of ethics with history—remains insistent that his temporal ethics functions wholly beyond history. Importantly, as I hinted in the introduction to this chapter, in his response to *Otherwise than Being* ("At This Very Moment…"), Derrida argues that Levinas' later ethics in a certain sense remains *contaminated* by some of the very things from which it attempts to tear itself away.[169] To be sure, in this response, Derrida pays no particular attention to the question of history, as he does in "Violence and Metaphysics".[170] But since history remains, as we have just seen, one of the very things from which Levinas' ethics attempts to tear itself away, and since Derrida's response hinges in part on Levinas' usage of gendered categories, it is worth considering this response to see what it might tell us about the potential implication of Levinas' late conception of temporal ethics with the very history that it attempts to escape. This is my effort in this section.

Now, like "Violence and Metaphysics", "At This Very Moment…" pursues a double reading of Levinas that begins with a moment of faithful commentary.[171] In this first moment, Derrida attempts to describe how Levinas' writing (his work, or *ouvrage*) creates a movement of the same towards the Other—that is, a Work (*Œuvre*)—*within* language

[168] OB 142.
[169] ATVM 152.
[170] On Peter Osborne's (1995: 224n19) reading, because *Otherwise than Being* does not significantly revise Levinas' "treatment of history—most of the substance of ["Violence and Metaphysics"] continues to apply." My remaining argument in this chapter coheres with this view.
[171] Derrida's frames his reading as a gift to Levinas—a gift "beyond all restitution" and displaying an ingratitude to its recipient—that operates in the first instance "*in conformity* with what [Levinas] will have said". ATVM 146.

itself.[172] Here, Derrida is particularly interested in how Levinas himself deploys language in *Otherwise than Being* as a way of letting the trace of the saying inscribe itself in *his* said, that is, in the grammatical presence of his own writing.[173] Derrida begins this investigation by having one of the *two* voices that play a role in "At This Very Moment…" recite a lengthy passage from *Otherwise than Being* that refers to the 'here I am' of substitution.[174] The first textual voice notes of this passage that it significantly exemplifies the "complicated" presence of Levinas' 'here I am'.[175] Indeed, although in this passage Levinas seemingly speaks of the 'here I am' in the present tense (writing, for example, that the 'here I am' "*is* the subjectivity of a man [*l'homme*] of flesh and blood"), by always placing the 'here I am' under quotation marks, Levinas also "seems to erase the present event of any irreplaceable 'here I am', also comes *to say* that in the 'here I am' the I [*le Moi*] is no longer presented as a subject, present to itself, making itself a present of itself (I-me): it is [*il*] is declined before all declension".[176] In simpler terms, Derrida's claim here is that *even* in speaking of the 'here I am' in the present tense, Levinas' writing is somehow capable of signalling a temporal dimension that is not simply to reducible to presence and the present.[177] But at this point in Derrida's text, this reflection is interrupted by *another* voice, who "comes to disturb the first one" by claiming that Levinas' quotation of the 'here I am' is in fact "torn from the mouth of a woman, so as to be given to the other."[178] This second voice—which Derrida reveals is the voice of a *feminine* reader (*léctrice*) of Levinas—is here pointing out that in the original text from which Levinas' quotes the 'here I am' (*The Song of Songs*), that saying is in fact said by

[172] Derrida here uses the definition of the Work given by Levinas in "Meaning and Sense": "*A work conceived radically is a movement of the Same towards the Other which never returns to the Same*." MSe 91-92.
[173] In this connection, Derrida also tempers his repeated assertion in "Violence and Metaphysics" that language *of necessity* closes itself off to the Other, now holding that language is *perhaps* "opened to the wholly other, to its own beyond". ATVM 150.
[174] ATVM 151. Derrida's text takes shape as a dialogue between two readers of Levinas, one of whom, we will see shortly, is gendered as feminine (*lèctrice*). The passage cited by Derrida is taken from: OB 141-142.
[175] ATVM 152.
[176] ATVM 152.
[177] cf. ATVM 154.
[178] ATVM 154.

a *woman*. But, this feminine voice asks: "Why doesn't [Levinas] specify that in his work?"[179] To which the first voice, as if on behalf of Levinas, responds: "Doubtless because that remains, in this context and with regard to his most urgent purpose, secondary."[180] And here, already in this brief exchange, we catch a glimpse of the double reading that Derrida attempts to develop in "At This Very Moment…": although Levinas' writing perhaps lets the saying inscribe the trace of illeity in its own said, that inscription perhaps also involves the silencing of an alterity that remains, with regard to his own purposes, secondary.

In the remainder of his text, Derrida continues to explore how Levinas' writing makes room for the saying's trace by paying particular attention to those passages in *Otherwise than Being* where Levinas explicitly mentions the language that he is using.[181] These analyses are long and complex and we need not recapitulate them at length here.[182] The important point to take from them, for Derrida, is that Levinas' writing functions via a complex process of seriality, which is also what enables Levinas to carry out the Work of letting the absolute or anarchic trace of illeity pass within the said of his own writing.[183] Significantly, however, this account is provided by only *one* of the two voices in "At This Very Moment…". But for the second, *feminine* voice in Derrida's text, whatever the merits of Levinas' method of seriality, there is still an important question to be answered regarding the assumed gendering of some of the central categories that Levinas equates with the idea of ethics. As the first two sections of this chapter highlighted, Levinas does not shy away from marking certain aspects of his ethics in *Otherwise than Being* with a gender, even when those aspects are also said to function *before* or *beyond* those empirical dimensions (e.g. history or biology) which one would normally associate with the condition of possibility for such gendered demarcation. We of course saw a prominent example of this in the first section, with Levinas' explicit claims that the way of the face in proximity can be understood as *illeity*,

[179] ATVM 153.
[180] ATVM 153.
[181] cf. ATVM 153-178.
[182] For an extended discussion of Derrida's reading here, see: Critchley, 2014: 121-129.
[183] Through seriality, Derrida writes, we "thus approach the '*il*' that comes (to pass) in this work". ATVM 170.

that is, as a trace which "[a]s He [*Il*] and third person is somehow outside the distinction between being and entities."[184] According to the feminine voice in Derrida's text, these types of example are significant because they show that Levinas' writing continually operates with a gendered demarcation, specifically, one that most often favours the *masculine* over the feminine.[185]

Ultimately, Derrida claims, such gendering also raises a problem for Levinas' ethics. The problem is that despite gendering concepts like illeity as masculine, Levinas elsewhere claims that sexual difference is always *secondary* to the human relation that ethical concepts like illeity and proximity articulate.[186] Here, Derrida's feminine voice quotes Levinas' Talmudic commentaries:

> The meaning of the feminine will thus become clear against the background of human essence, the *Isha* from the *Ish*. The feminine does not derive from the masculine; rather, the division into feminine and masculine—the dichotomy—derives from what is human. (….) beyond the personal relationship that establishes itself between these two beings issued from two creative acts, the particularity of the feminine is secondary. It is not woman who is secondary; it is the relationship with woman as woman that does not belong to what is fundamentally human.[187]

Clearly visible in this passage is Levinas' affirmation that the particularity of sexual difference—understood as femininity—*derives*, or is *secondary*, to the primordial level of the human, or to the ethics, which, at least in Levinas' thematisation of illeity, remains associated with the masculinity of man. But, the feminine voice asks: "How can one mark as masculine *the very thing* said to be anterior or still foreign to sexual difference?"[188] The answer, Derrida clarifies, is that one can do so only by performing a certain "mastery *of*

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[184] MSe 105.
[185] For the feminine voice, this gendering stretches even as far as Levinas' theorisation of the Work (*Œuvre*) itself, which, in its definition as an alterity that exceeds the work (*ouvrage*), closely resembles what Levinas called had a *son* in *Totality and Infinity*: "The son is not only my work (*ouvrage*), like a poem, or an object" (TI 277). ATVM 179.
[186] As we saw above, Levinas explicitly says that proximity "might [just as well] be called humanity". OB 46.
[187] Levinas, 1994a: 167-169; cf. Levinas, 1990: 34-35.
[188] ATVM 180.

femininity".[189] In other words, by equating the masculinity of illeity with a primary human neutrality that is prior to sexual difference, Levinas in fact ends up equating the secondary status of sexual difference with the secondary status of the feminine vis-à-vis the masculine.[190] As the feminine voice puts it, "To desexualise the relation to the wholly other (…), to make sexuality secondary with respect to a wholly other that in itself would not be sexually marked (…), is always to make sexual difference secondary *as* femininity."[191]

For Derrida, this devaluation of femininity is not merely present in Levinas' Talmudic commentaries, but is rather endemic to his work as a whole insofar as it continually denominates absolute alterity *as* masculinity. "What [Levinas] comments on", Derrida argues, "is consonant with a whole network of affirmations that are his, or those of him, 'he.'"[192] Against this backdrop, it is not simply Levinas' emphasis on the illeity of the face that arises as problematic. To this example can be added the discussion of fecundity in *Totality and Infinity*, which, as noted in the last chapter, is precisely framed by Levinas as the ontological relation between two masculine beings: the father and his son.[193] Similarly, and though Derrida does not explicitly make this connection, it is clear that Levinas' assertion in *Otherwise than Being* that "[p]roximity is fraternity", or that "[t]he neighbour [in proximity] is a brother", falls within the scope of this problematic network of affirmations.[194] Indeed, reading him carefully, we might even add to this network some of Levinas' descriptions of substitution, specifically, his insistence that the 'here I am' of substitution "is the subjectivity of a *man* [*Subjectivité de l'homme*] of flesh and blood", a subjectivity that, moreover, places

[189] ATVM 183.
[190] As Critchley argues, in pursuing this argument, Derrida is not simply claiming that "Levinas' work is anti-feminist, patriarchal, or sexist, but rather that by subordinating sexual difference to ethical difference and by trying to maintain the latter in a sexual *indifference* or *neutrality*, Levinas privileges the masculine." Critchley, 2014: 134; cf. Derrida and McDonald, 1982: 72-73.
[191] ATVM 183.
[192] ATVM 182.
[193] Having almost entirely ignored fecundity in "Violence and Metaphysics", in "At This Very Moment", Derrida explicitly queries Levinas' decision to cast fecundity as the ontological relation between a father and his son: cf. ATVM 179-180.
[194] OB 139, 87. Derrida further explores the problematic valorisation of fraternity within Western philosophy in *The Politics of Friendship*: Derrida, 2005: passim.

him “at the service of *men* [*des hommes*] that look at me.”[195] In each of these cases, Derrida argues, “it always so happens that the wholly other who is [presumably] *not yet marked* [by the travails of history and being] happens to *already* by marked by masculinity (he-before he/she, son-before son/daughter, father-before father/mother, etc.).”[196] And the problem that these repeated gendered ascriptions ultimately raises, as Simon Critchley (commenting on Derrida) aptly puts it, is that “Levinas’ work can only go unto the wholly other on the condition that feminine alterity is circumscribed and inhumed. The strange consequence of the latter is that Levinas’ work is itself engaged in a denial of (feminine) alterity, and thus remains enclosed within the economy of the Same which it has continually striven to exceed.”[197]

How, then, does this discussion relate to *Otherwise than Being*’s conception of temporal ethics and its potential implication with history? It will have been noticed by the reader that in his analysis of Levinas’ work, Derrida remains relatively silent on the question of history.[198] But this is not to suggest the impossibility of relating Derrida’s text back to that question. Indeed, as noted at the outset of this section, one of Derrida’s central claims “At This Very Moment…” is that Levinas’ ethical schema in *Otherwise than Being* finds itself *contaminated* by some of the very domains that it precisely attempts to escape. Contamination, Derrida writes, does “not come about as an accidental evil. It is a sort of fate of the Saying.”[199] And this contamination becomes nowhere more explicit than in Levinas’ repeated prioritisation of the presumed neutrality of the masculine. Indeed, via this gendered repetition, Levinas’ temporal ethics in *Otherwise than Being* finds itself fatefully contaminated by an historical tendency which, whatever other openings it might create, “simultaneously places, and this is what is important, masculinity [*le masculin*] in command and at the beginning (the *arkhè*), on

[195] OB 142, 149 (emphasis added). Once again, in his response Derrida does not explicitly draw attention to these two assertions, even if he does directly quote the first of them. ATVM 152, cf. 181.
[196] ATVM 180.
[197] Critchley, 2014: 136-137.
[198] The word history appears only twice in Derrida’s text, both times under the banner of “history of philosophy”. ATVM 180-184.
[199] ATVM 185, cf. 167.

a par" with the ethical dignity of *humanity itself*.[200] At its heart, and despite its explicit attempt to depart from all the structures and systems that Western thought traditionally takes as a 'sure harbour' for its reflections, Levinas' conception of temporal ethics, insofar as it continues to privilege the presumed neutrality of the masculine, remains implicated with precisely that historical "*tradition*" that would refuse to grant the feminine reader of Levinas her "ontological [nay, *ethical*] dignity."[201] Far from remaining anarchic, then, on these points, Levinas' temporal ethics in *Otherwise than Being* continues to carry the trace of a well-established historico-philosophical tradition: "'phallogocentrism' (as the complicity of Western metaphysics with a notion of male firstness)."[202] In this way, if for Levinas it would not be possible to speak of a saying *beyond essence* if this saying did not leave its trace in the history of the West, then similarly, on the basis of these reflections, it seems impossible to speak of a temporal ethics that is *wholly beyond history* if that ethics continues to carry the trace of the very history that it is supposed to exceed.[203] Yet, it is precisely this second trace—the trace of history *within* the beyond or the before—that makes itself *felt* at the level of Levinas' gendering of the absolute alterity of proximity and substitution. And ultimately, it is precisely this historical trace that serves as the "evidence" that Levinas' temporal ethics in *Otherwise than Being* is not *wholly* otherwise than history—as he of course claims it to be.[204]

Nevertheless, the objection might arise that this argument only holds if one overlooks Levinas' explicit pronouncements on maternity in *Otherwise than Being*. Does Derrida's reading not ignore these assertions? And have I not, in following Derrida on these points, also failed to reckon with the fact that Levinas introduces the notion of maternity (*qua* substitution) *precisely* as a way of overcoming the problematic tendency—still evident in *Totality and Infinity*—to base temporal ethics on an historical state of affairs affirming the

[200] Derrida and McDonald, 1984: 73.
[201] ATVM 180 (emphasis added).
[202] Derrida and McDonald, 1984: 69.
[203] cf. OB 178.
[204] "The judgement at which the subjectivity is to remain apologetically present has to be made against the evidence of history (and against philosophy, if philosophy coincides with the evidence of history)." TI 243.

ethical priority of masculine over feminine relations?[205] Is not this patriarchal tradition exactly *displaced* in Levinas' assertion that maternity is the ultimate meaning of substitution? This objection has merit, and it calls for two responses. The first involves recognising that though maternity is undeniably equated with substitution in *Otherwise than Being*, the ethical value of maternity is not itself *unequivocably* upheld throughout the text. Indeed, as we saw above, though for Levinas maternity suggests the proper sense of substitution, the 'here I am' of substitution, in predisposing the subject to the temporal opening of proximity, is *itself* "not a babbling language, like the expression of a mute, or the discourse of a stranger shut up in his *maternal* language [*langue maternelle*]."[206] Now, it is true that Levinas makes this assertion only in passing, and it is perhaps no more than a slip of the tongue. Nevertheless, what this assertion begins to suggest is that though maternity—as the model *par excellence* of susceptibility and bearing of responsibility—certainly has an important role to play in Levinas' late temporal ethics, this role is still not quite the unambiguous excellency of the saying, of the *illeity* that signifies the "very passing toward a past more remote than any past and any future which are still set in my time—the past of the other".[207] Secondly, and perhaps more crucially, though maternity here certainly rises above the merely subordinate role that it plays in *Totality and Infinity*, we cannot ignore the fact that *as* the ethical condition of substitution, what maternity, properly speaking, still makes possible, or grounds, is precisely the ethical relation between *brothers* in proximity. As we have repeatedly seen, for Levinas, the maternity of substitution signifies the subject's susceptiveness to the anarchic

[205] This is precisely the argument that some sympathetic readers of Levinas, like John Llewelyn (1991: 219; cf. 1995: 208-209), have provided in defence of the introduction of maternity (*qua* substitution) in *Otherwise than Being*. On this reading, maternity is introduced "as though to compensate for the virilisation the of concept of welcome acquires [in *Totality and Infinity*] and as though to answer or anticipate the objection that the use made in the earlier book of concepts of gender [like paternity] is indefensibly one-sided, however non-biological and non-sexual that us is claimed to be." Bernard Forthomme (1979: 382-383) similarly suggests that the introduction of maternity effectively corrects the "virility" of fecundity in *Totality and Infinity*.

[206] OB 143. Though she does not focus on this specific passage, Donna Brody (2001: 74) likewise suggests that there is a certain ambiguity to Levinas' characterisation of the feminine (*qua* maternity) in *Otherwise than Being*: "she may be read as redetermined according to the most eminent meaning—or she may be read as *altogether* obliterated, exiled even from the significance of maternity."

[207] MSe 106.

temporality of the neighbour in proximity. But that "neighbour is a brother."[208] And it is in this precise sense, we might add, that the 'here I am' of substitution places the subject "at the service of *men* [*des hommes*] that look at me (…) saying itself."[209] Heeding these claims, we cannot fail to draw the necessary conclusion that despite being elevated from its previous, merely subordinate role in *Totality and Infinity*, in *Otherwise than Being* maternity continues to play a *merely mediate* role in founding that community of brothers where the subject becomes irrevocably exposed to the anarchic temporality beyond being and history of the Other: proximity. Maternity, that is, despite explicitly replacing paternity as one of the conditions of temporal ethics, does not entirely manage to absolve itself of the historical trace of patri-archy that animated the fecundity of *Totality and Infinity*. That trace, as Sandford points out, "survives, somewhat covertly, in the fraternal community that [maternity] founds."[210] Thus, even in elevating maternity beyond the mere femininity of dwelling or *eros*, the anarchic temporal ethics of *Otherwise than Being* remains incapable of completely extricating itself from that patriarchal trace that here, as elsewhere, functions as an evidence of its constitutive implication or contamination with the historical.

In all these senses, then, Derrida seems justified in arguing that contamination is not merely an accidental evil in the temporal ethics of *Otherwise than Being*. Insofar as that ethics continues to constitutively premise itself on the patriarchal tradition of the West, a contamination with the historical is indeed "a sort of fate of the Saying".[211] And insofar as this contamination between Levinas' temporal ethics and history necessarily entails a certain violence towards the feminine, Derrida is also correct to insist that this contamination "is to be negotiated. [That] it would be worse without negotiation."[212] Once again, however, because the Levinas of *Otherwise than Being* still fails to recognise the constitutive implication between temporal ethics and history, it is precisely this negotiation that he fails to

[208] OB 87.
[209] OB 142, 149 (emphasis added).
[210] Sandford, 2001: 198-199. Elsewhere, Sandford adds: "Levinas' text has not been able to effect or install an alternative feminine *parenté* because ultimately maternity must and does give way to paternity, that is, to the law of the father." Sandford, 2000: 92.
[211] ATVM 185.
[212] ATVM 185.

provide. Like in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas remains incapable of formulating a strategy for negotiating the *risks* that emerge from the historical implication of the exposure to the anarchic temporality of the Other in proximity.[213] In this particular sense, therefore, Levinas' temporal ethics of alterity, despite explicitly moving away from an intuitive framework, goes no further than Bergson's temporal ethics. Not only does Levinas' temporal ethics, like that of his predecessor, remain implicated with history at its most constitutive level. In the final analysis, because Levinas, like Bergson, refuses to acknowledge this constitutive implication, he likewise fails to advocate a strategy whereby the violent risks that it necessitates might become negotiated and averted.

4.4. Conclusion: beyond Levinas

In this chapter, I have maintained that Levinas' temporal ethics in *Otherwise than Being* remains implicated with the order of history. I have suggested that despite reconfiguring some of the central ethical terms of *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas' late temporal ethics, insofar as it continues to base itself on terms like maternity and fraternity, is not *wholly* beyond history. I have also argued that Levinas fails to recognise this constitutive implication between temporal ethics and the historical, and that, in so doing, he also neglects to develop a strategy whereby the violent tendencies that it creates might become negotiated. In this sense, I contend, despite decisively moving away from Bergson's ethical emphasis on the intuition, Levinas has not managed to entirely extricate himself from the problem of history that plagued that earlier philosophy.

Levinas' failures to recognise the implication between ethics and history would perhaps be decisive from the point of view of temporal ethics if his was the only philosophy that sought to take up the Bergsonian injunction of ethically relating oneself to a differential temporality. As I noted in introduction to this thesis, however, Levinas is not the only thinker

[213] Levinas is here still no closer to fulfilling Derrida's earlier call for an ethical "*vigilance* (...) chosen as the least violence by a philosophy that takes history, that is, finitude seriously; a philosophy aware of itself as *historical* in each of its aspects." VM 117.

to have taken up this ethical injunction. In a real sense, this injunction is what also drives Deleuze's ethical philosophy—both in his solo work, and in his joint work with Guattari. What remains to be decided, in the remainder of this thesis, is whether Deleuze's ethical philosophy is any more capable than Bergson's and Levinas' of providing a successful resolution to the problem of history. Taking *Difference and Repetition* and *A Thousand Plateaus* as two privileged exemplars of Deleuze's ethical thought, this is the question that the next two chapters of this thesis will strive to clarify. My argument will be that the problem of history only finds an adequate resolution in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. We will begin to see why, in the next chapter, by tackling the distinctive historical problems that emerge in the intensive temporal ethics of *Difference and Repetition*.

5. Deleuze I: the intensive temporal ethics of *Difference and Repetition*

Unlike Levinas, Deleuze never develops an explicit critique of Bergsonian intuition in the writings that immediately follow the publication of *Bergsonism*, where, as chapter one noted, the intuition is so highly valued as a method for seeking and affirming temporal difference.[1] Nevertheless, in *Difference and Repetition*, published only two years after *Bergsonism*, Deleuze's philosophy and ethics of time begin to depart in significant respects from Bergson's prioritisation of duration and intuition. As is well known (and as this chapter's first section will show), *Difference and Repetition* develops an ontology of time that prioritises not Bergson's but Nietzsche's conception of time as the repetition of eternal return. Involved in this Nietzschean rethinking of time is also a radically distinctive conception of how an affirmative relation to temporal novelty is to be created in practice. For the Deleuze of *Difference and Repetition*, if Nietzsche's eternal return in a certain sense explains how time operates to create diversity in the world, then it also tells us something about the kind of ethical subjects that we must *become* in order to make that creative temporal process the object of a practical affirmation.

As I will clarify in this chapter's second section, Deleuze's conception of this affirmative relation to time bears almost no resemblance to Bergsonian intuition. Alongside drawing on Nietzsche for his account of temporality *qua* eternal return, Deleuze also weds his conception of temporal ethics to a structuralist framework that remains entirely absent from Bergson's writings. Inspired by the undercurrent of structuralism that dominated French thought in the 1960s, *Difference and Repetition* argues that we can ethically affirm the temporality of eternal return only by making ourselves what Deleuze calls a "differenciator [*différenciant*]" of difference—a notion which he reveals bears certain affinities with the concept of "the empty square [*la case vide*]" that is promulgated by thinkers like Claude Lévi-Strauss and Louis Althusser.[2] To further cement his departure from Bergson, Deleuze also

[1] For a reading of Deleuze's methodological divergence from Bergson, see: Bryant, 2008: 73-80.
[2] For Deleuze's most sustained engagement with structuralism outside *Difference and Repetition*, see:

clarifies the nature of this differenciator as *intensive* with an appeal to Gilbert Simondon's philosophy of individuation.[3]

To say that Deleuze departs from Bergsonian intuition is not, however, to say that he breaks away from all the problems that were entailed by that notion. Indeed, as I demonstrate in this chapter's third section, although Deleuze does in many ways depart from Bergsonian intuition, his own temporal ethics in *Difference and Repetition* remains, like Bergson's ethics, defined by a problematic relation to history and already determined forms of actuality.[4] Bringing Deleuze's ethical conception into dialogue with Félix Guattari's critical reading thereof in "Machine and Structure", I show that the temporal ethics of *Difference and Repetition*, despite explicitly positioning itself as such, remains unable to break itself off from all empirical, actual, or historical content. Indeed, as I argue with the help of Guattari, to operate in the affirmative way Deleuze proposes, the differenciator of difference must remain more implicated with the order actuality than Deleuze is willing to admit. And this constitutive implication with the historical presents certain *dangers* for the ethical project that Deleuze advocates in *Difference and Repetition*. However, as I argue, it is just these dangers that Deleuze fails to develop a successful strategic response to in attempting to completely separate his ethics from history. In this way, I suggest, despite providing another potential theoretical route out of Bergson's intuitive philosophy, Deleuze's temporal ethics in *Difference and Repetition* remains incapable of providing the resolution to the problem of history that we have thus far sought in this thesis.

HRS 170-192; LS 36-71. On the connection between these two texts, see also: Bowden, 2011: 152-184.

[3] Bergson criticises the notion of intensity in the *Time and Free Will*, and Deleuze famously picks up on this critique in the last chapter of *Difference and Repetition*. For more on Deleuze's departure from Bergson on the question of intensity, see: DR 239-240; Ansell-Pearson, 1999: 74-76; cf. B 91, 100-101; cf. Lundy, 2017: 174-194.

[4] In this chapter, I operate under the presumption that when Deleuze speaks of the 'actual' in *Difference and Repetition*, he takes the actual to be a *historical* formation. I believe this inference finds its justification on two closely related claims Deleuze makes with regards to the temporality of eternal return: firstly, that the eternal return leaves all historical "conditions" behind (DR 90-91) and, secondly, that the explicated qualities and extensions of the actual are precisely that "which does not pass the test of eternal return" (DR 243-244).

5.1. Time as eternal return

In his original preface to the text, Deleuze presents *Difference and Repetition* as setting itself two central tasks. First, the text attempts "to think difference in itself independently [*indépendamment*] of the forms of representation which reduce it to the Same".[5] In other words, it attempts to liberate difference from the four conceptual and representational schemas—identiy, opposition, analogy and resemblance—that prevent difference from being thought in its immediacy.[6] Against the negative conceptions of difference developed by thinkers like Aristotle, Leibniz or Hegel, who all make difference work only "in the service of identity", Deleuze attempts first of all to think difference as "the element, the ultimate unity" that underlies the identity of every object and thing.[7] Secondly, and as an upshot of this ontological effort to assert the immediacy of difference in itself, Deleuze also aims to conceptualise "the relation of different to different independently [*indépendamment*] of those forms which make them pass through the negative."[8] Otherwise said, besides thinking difference in itself, *Difference and Repetition* also tries to show how difference is ontologically capable of creating or affirming itself *as* difference "without any mediation whatsoever by the identical, the similar, the analogous or the opposed."[9] To be upheld as the ultimate unity underlying any identity, "Difference must [*il faut*] be shown as *differing*."[10] It must be shown as that which differs from itself to create the 'diversity' between objects and things in the world.[11] And to understand how this process operates without any mediation whatsoever, Deleuze argues, we must also think difference as being inseparably tied to a process of repetition. We must think difference in itself as the element that *repeats* itself (once again, as difference) in the processes by which it ontologically creates diversity in the

[5] DR xix.
[6] DR 29.
[7] DR 49, 56. This critique of negative conceptions of difference (cf. DR 28-69), Deleuze later claims, is not without "moral" and "practical implications". DR 268.
[8] DR xix.
[9] DR 117.
[10] DR 56. I agree with Lawlor (2019: 450-451) that we must remain attentive to Deleuze's usage of the common French idiom "il faut", a phrase he frequently deploys to convey a sense of ethical necessity.
[11] For Deleuze, diversity is distinguished from difference as an object is distinguished from its condition of existence: "Difference is not diversity. Diversity is given, but difference is that by which the given is given, that by which the given is given as diverse." DR 222.

world, “making it so that repetition is, for itself, difference in itself.”[12]

Deleuze introduces *Difference and Repetition* with the strong suggestion that there is an immediately ethical dimension to this ontological thought of the repetition of difference. Indeed, on the text's very first page, Deleuze defines repetition in explicitly ethical terms, writing that “[t]o repeat is to behave [*comporter*] in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent”, before adding that this “external conduct [*conduite externe*]” perhaps echoes “a more profound, internal repetition within the singular.”[13] Furthermore, shortly after positively citing Bergson’s *Two Sources* and its opposition to the “habit of acquiring habits (the whole of obligation)—which is essentially moral [*moral*] or has the form of the good”, Deleuze also claims that we “must [*doit*]” briefly reflect on what unites Nietzsche and Kierkegaard’s respective conceptions of repetition.[14] In particular, we must recognise that unlike Hegel, those two thinkers do not simply attempt to develop a merely abstract or representative conception of repetition. Theirs is a *practical* or *active* conception: “They want to make it act, and make it carry out immediate acts [*actes immédiats*].”[15] And in part, what their conception acts against is precisely the “moral law, to the point where it becomes the suspension of ethics [*l’éthique*; *qua* traditional morality], a thought beyond good and evil.”[16] To that extent, Deleuze argues, when Nietzsche or Kierkegaard respectively tell us about the Overman and the knight of faith, we should not understand these remarks as mere metaphysical musings. We “must [*il faut*]” take each case as an indication of how a repetition opposing the moral law “should [*doit*] be ‘played’” by ethical agents or actors.[17] Unsurprisingly, given this emphasis on the ethical import of a thought of repetition, when Deleuze outlines his own project in *Difference and Repetition*, he once again deploys this ethical language, writing that in order to truly separate repetition

[12] DR 94.
[13] DR 1.
[14] DR 4, 5-11.
[15] DR 8.
[16] DR 6.
[17] DR 9-10. Deleuze frames this ethical project in theatrical terms. This framing is later echoed in *The Logic of Sense*, where “the actor” emerges as one of the figures of an ethics of “counter-actualisation”. LS 146-168; cf. Deleuze, 2004c: 94-116.

from the negative forms that distort it, "we must find [*il faut trouver*] the Self [*Soi*] of repetition, the singularity within that which repeats. For there is no repetition without a repeater, nothing repeated without a repetitious soul."[18]

These various ethical and ontological threads are most explicitly woven together by Deleuze in the second chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, which provides a "theory of time" showing how difference ontologically affirms itself in repetition.[19] This theory of time is not, however, that chapter's exclusive focus. As an account of repetition, the chapter also provides an indication of the kinds of action that a repetitive soul or Self must undertake in order to affirm difference in itself and, as such, also provides what we might call a practical ethical model for the affirmation of a differential temporality.[20] As I demonstrate in the next section, this ethical Self of repetition is what Deleuze calls the intensive "differenciator [*différenciant*]" or "dark precursor [*sombre prècursor*]" of difference.[21] Before we fully understand the ethical import of this conception, however, it is vital that we provide a more extensive account of Deleuze's complex notion of repetition.

Now, for Deleuze, the process of repetition is to be understood as operating on three different levels or "syntheses", which are also broadly associated with the three dimensions of time (present, past and future).[22] Deleuze begins this account of repetition by outlining the first of these three syntheses, the synthesis of the present. Drawing on Hume's notion of habit, Deleuze frames this first repetition as a contraction of "cases, elements, agitations or homogeneous instants."[23] Deleuze's basic idea here is that everything that exists in a certain sense takes shape as a habitual contraction or 'bringing together' of divergent elements. An organic body, for example, is made up of "contracted water, earth, light and air—not merely

[18] DR 23.
[19] DR 85, 117.
[20] Like James Williams (2003: 84-106), I see each of Deleuze's famous three syntheses of time as providing distinct conceptions of practical or ethical activity. I also agree with Henry Somers-Hall (2013: 78-83) that Deleuze pinpoints the third synthesis in particular as "offer[ing] us the possibility of a more appropriate relation to temporality." For more on the ethical import of Deleuze's third synthesis, see also: Voss, 2013: 206-212; Widder, 2008: 86-99.
[21] DR 117.
[22] "In all three syntheses, present, past and future are revealed as Repetition, but in very different modes." DR 94.
[23] DR 70.

prior to the recognition or representation [that it has] of these, but prior to their being sensed."[24] From the point of view of time, the important point to note about these sub-representative contractions is that every contracting body or thing always already exists both as a "retention" of previous or *past* contractions *and* as a set of "expectations" about what it will contract in the *future*.[25] As Deleuze writes, we contract not simply on the basis of what we already "*are*", that is, on the basis of the contractions that we have previously undergone; by our contractions, "we [also] affirm our right and our expectation in regard to that which we [will] contract."[26] Thus, a certain conception of time already presents itself to us as contracting subjects—as subjects who are passively and habitually constituted in the present as an aggregate of contractions.[27] "This synthesis contracts the successive independent instants into one another, thereby constituting the lived, or living, present. It is in this present that time is deployed. To it belong both the past and the future: the past insofar as the preceding instants are retained in the contraction; the future because its expectation is anticipated in this same contraction."[28]

Deleuze argues, however, that if this first synthesis provides an entry into the three dimensions of time from the perspective of the present, it also fails to provide an account of how the present in particular *passes*. "The claim of the present is precisely that it passes", as can be seen from the fact that even the first synthesis of time organises the present into the dimensions of past and future.[29] This organisation indicates that the present cannot persist without at the same time passing into something other than itself.[30] But nothing about the mechanism of contraction in the first synthesis explains this passage. And here, Deleuze writes, "[w]e cannot avoid the necessary conclusion—*that there must be another time in*

[24] DR 73.
[25] DR 73.
[26] DR 73-74.
[27] The first synthesis' contracting subject is a passive—or larval—subject that operates 'beneath' the level of conscious awareness and recognition. DR 74-75.
[28] DR 70-71.
[29] DR 79; Widder, 2012a: 45.
[30] Williams, 2011: 13.

which the first synthesis of time can occur. This refers us to a second synthesis."[31]

This second synthesis of time (or of the past) is where Deleuze's account of repetition most heavily relies on Bergson. In accordance with *Matter and Memory*'s argument that the past gives present perception its "guidance" and "direction", Deleuze holds that the first synthesis of time presupposes the existence of a past "as the pure condition without which it would not pass."[32] Yet, just like for Bergson this past is not reducible to present or actual perception but is rather different in kind from it, so too Deleuze argues that it would be "futile to try to reconstitute the past from the presents between which it is trapped".[33] The past that "grounds" the passage of the present is not simply *a* present that has passed and that is no longer existent, for if that were the case, we would still be left with no explanation as to how *that* present was capable of passing into the past.[34] Instead, the past grounds the passage of the present because it has a manner "of being posed as already-there, presupposed by the passing present and causing it to pass."[35] Deleuze frames this 'already-there-ness' of the past in terms of its *virtual coexistence* with the actual present. Now, in accordance with Deleuze's broader definition of the virtual as something that is not actual but nonetheless fully real and completely determined, the pure past must here be understood as the well-determined set of differential relations and elements which constitutes, as it were, the other 'side' of actual presents without being in any way reducible to them.[36] In this manner of *virtually* coexisting with actual presents, the past also makes those presents *pass*. Indeed: "No present would ever pass were it not past 'at the same time' as it is present; no past would ever be constituted unless it were first constituted 'at the same time' as it was

[31] DR 79.
[32] MM 152-153; B 59; DR 81.
[33] DR 81. *Matter and Memory* repeatedly states that there is a radical difference in kind between present perception and pure memory. cf. MM 137-139.
[34] Deleuze repeatedly speaks of the second synthesis as the "ground" of the first. DR 79-80.
[35] Thus, the past "forms a pure, general, *a priori* element of all time." DR 82.
[36] DR 208-210. This distinction between the virtual and the actual is one that Deleuze will continue to rely upon throughout his career. For prominent examples, see: B 94-102; AO 129, 249, 255, 358; ATP 95-110, 241, 359; Deleuze, 1986: 56, 64-65, 102-112; Deleuze, 1989: 41, 46-47, 54, 68-98; Deleuze, 2001: 31-32; Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 155-161; Deleuze and Parnet, 2007: 148-152.

present."[37] Rather than simply being a present that has passed, the past is therefore a virtuality that is always both prior to and "contemporaneous" (or coextensive) with every actual present.[38] Thus, unlike the past of the first synthesis, the virtual past is not stored up at the level of the successive, bodily or material contractions that compose an actual subject at a given moment in time. Because it must be prior to the present in order to make the latter pass, "the past is not conserved in the present in relation to which it is past, but is conserved in itself."[39] The storehouse of the past's memories, to use Bergson's expression, is neither the body nor the brain, but *itself*.[40] This entails that when Deleuze speaks of the past that grounds the passage of the present, he refers not to *a* given present's past—not to *a* present that has passed—but to the virtual *whole* of the past—the "pure past", or the "past in general".[41] The entirety of this virtual past is certainly not uniform, for once again Deleuze holds (with Bergson) that "this whole past coexists with *itself*, in varying degrees of relaxation … and of contraction."[42] Like Bergson's famous cone of memory, the virtual whole of the second synthesis includes all of the past "in all its details", but does so at more or less expanded or contracted levels, in accordance with the relevance of each of those levels to "the present reality".[43] In this context, the present that was only an aggregate of material or actual contractions in the first synthesis now finds a new sense. The actual present now becomes the most contracted degree of the entire virtual past, and thus becomes defined in function of "the relations of coexistence between the levels of a pure past, each present being no more than the actualisation or representation of one of these levels."[44]

The second synthesis of time creates a more complex form repetition than the first.[45] Nevertheless, Deleuze claims that the repetition provided by the second synthesis remains

[37] DR 81; cf. B 58.
[38] Deleuze here echoes Bergson's claims that true memory is "[c]oextensive with consciousness" and that "our consciousness of the present is already memory." MM 151; cf. B 55-56.
[39] DR 82; cf. MM 161-162.
[40] MM 74.
[41] Deleuze writes: "the whole past coexists with the present in relation to which it is past, but the pure element of the past in general pre-exists the passing present." DR 82.
[42] DR 83.
[43] MM 161-162, 241-242.
[44] DR 83.
[45] cf. DR 287.

unsatisfactory on at least two fronts.[46] First, whilst by grounding of the passage of time in the present the second synthesis certainly goes 'beyond' the domain of actual succession, it still remains *too* closely attached to that domain. The main issue is that the articulation of the different levels of the virtual past still remains too closely modelled on the habitual or 'present reality' that it is supposed to ground or make pass.[47] In Deleuze's words, this problem is

> implicit in the second synthesis of time. For the latter, from the height of its pure past, surpassed and dominated the world of representation (…). However, it still remains relative to the representation that it grounds. It elevates the principles of representation—namely, identity, which it treats as an immemorial model, and resemblance, which it treats as a present image: the Same and the Similar. The shortcoming of the ground is to remain relative to what it grounds, to borrow [*empruter*] the characteristics of what it grounds, and to be proved [*prouver*] by these.[48]

As the ground of actual or habitual succession, the second synthesis retains too much similarity between itself and the actual present.[49] The relations of coexistence between the levels of the pure past are still too closely determined or articulated on the basis of their resemblance to the present reality that they supposedly animate, such that a confusion between the two becomes "inevitable (…), the pure past assuming thereby the status of a former present".[50] Hence, if the second synthesis provides us with a more complex form of repetition than the first, this is still not quite the repetition "without any mediation whatsoever by the identical" that Deleuze seeks in *Difference and Repetition*.[51] This entails, secondly, that if the repetition of the second synthesis provides us with a practical model for the

[46] For an extended discussion of Deleuze's departure from Bergson on these points, see: Widder, 2012b: 127-146.
[47] Deleuze does not explicitly frame the problems with the second synthesis in this way, but he might here be objecting to Bergson's stipulation (MM 152-153) that the systems of habit and true memory must "lend each other a mutual support." Deleuze's contention that "habit never gives rise to true repetition" certainly seems to provide ample grounds for rejecting Bergson's schema on this point. DR 5, 7-8.
[48] DR 88.
[49] On this point, see also Deleuze's corresponding critique of two virtual Ideas (namely, Epicurus' atom and Geoffroy's organism) that still model themselves too closely on "actuality [*actualité*]" or "actual existence [*existence actuelle*]." DR 184-185.
[50] DR 109.
[51] DR 117.

affirmation of difference in itself, then this model is still too inadequate to the latter's demands.[52] Rather than breaking with the first synthesis' habitual representation of difference, the ethical action proposed by the second synthesis still remains too closely attached to the habit that Deleuze sees as precisely precluding the emergence of "true repetition".[53]

Ultimately, a conception of repetition that is adequate to the demands of difference in itself can be based only on a third synthesis of time, the synthesis of the future or eternal return. Broadly speaking, Deleuze's claim in introducing this synthesis is that the succession of habit and the coexistence of memory both presuppose another, more radical, form of temporality.[54] Unlike the last two syntheses, however, this form of time is not articulated as a set of contractions—be they habitual/actual or mnemonic/virtual. Instead, the claim of the third synthesis is precisely that it effects a *dis-articulation* in being, that it *disjoins* or puts out of joint the temporalities of both the past and present.[55] Appealing to Hamlet's famous statement that "time is out of joint", Deleuze describes this synthesis thus:

> The joint, *cardo*, is what ensures the subordination of time to those properly cardinal points through which pass the periodic movements which it measures (…) By contrast, time out of joint means demented time or time outside the curve which gave it a god, liberated [*libéré*] from its overly simple circular figure, freed [*affranchi*] from the events which made up its content, its relation to movement overturned; in short, time presenting itself as an empty and pure form [*forme vide et pure*].[56]

The third synthesis is thus not subordinated to the movement or progressivity that dominated

[52] Williams (2003: 98) reads Deleuze's practical objection to the second synthesis as follows: "the pure past has given us some conditions, that hold for any given present, but no way of acting upon those conditions." This reading certainly edges in the right direction. However, given Deleuze's claims on the second synthesis' inability to distance itself from the present, it is perhaps more accurate to say that the second synthesis encourages not 'no activity' but rather the *wrong* type of activity (one is still too based on the identity of habit).
[53] DR 5. Deleuze does not (explicitly, at least) intend any of this as a critique of Bergsonian intuition. However, it would certainly be possible to construe a critique of intuition on the basis of these reflections, especially if one holds that the intuition creates an opening onto Memory itself. For a reading of (mystical) intuition emphasising this connection, see: Lawlor, 2003: 85-111; cf. Widder, 2008: 90-91.
[54] Somers-Hall, 2013: 78.
[55] Derrida (1994a, 2006) also ethically thematises the idea of a time out of joint.
[56] DR 88. On Deleuze's notion of the *cardo*, see also: Deleuze, 1978: np.

the first two syntheses.[57] Instead, that synthesis is both static and empty, meaning that it is not progressively determined *in time*, but is rather the unchanging temporal form under which any such determination can occur. "The synthesis is necessarily static, since time is no longer subordinated to movement; time is the most radical form of change, but the form of change does not change."[58] Citing Hölderlin's reading of *Oedipus Rex*, Deleuze conceives this form of change in terms of a "caesura" between the orders of the 'before' and 'after', where this caesura refers to the *unequal cut* or *fracture* in being that "creates the possibility of a temporal series."[59] In other words, the third synthesis is, for Deleuze, that fundamental "inequality" on the basis of which any 'before' or 'after'—or indeed, any past, present or future—are capable of being constituted.[60] "Every phenomenon refers to an inequality by which it is conditioned", and in relation to the first two syntheses, this inequality is the third synthesis itself.[61]

This pure and empty form of time should not be confused with anything that might normally be regarded as an actual or empirical content of time—a confusion, which, as we saw above, still governed the articulation of the second, Bergsonian synthesis.[62] For Deleuze, to claim that the third synthesis is empty or pure is precisely to recognise that it has "abjured its empirical content".[63] Said differently, the third synthesis is not articulated in relation to any form of actuality; its temporality is "not distributed according to this empirical criterion."[64] By contrast, and precisely because it lacks this empirical content and reference, the caesura of the third synthesis can only be described as *untimely*. This untimeliness, as Deleuze clarifies in both the Preface to *Difference and Repetition* and *Nietzsche and*

[57] Deleuze's dissociation of the third synthesis from movement opposes an age-old tradition in Western philosophy to conceive time in terms of movement. For two foundational examples, see: Plato, 1997: 37d; Aristotle, 1995: 279a15.
[58] DR 89; cf. Kant, 1998: A41/B58; Deleuze, 1984: vii-xii.
[59] DR 89. For Hölderlin (2009: 324), Oedipus undergoes a radical experience of time, where a "gap occurs in the course of the world" and where "beginning and end simply cannot be connected".
[60] DR 89.
[61] DR 222.
[62] Deleuze speaks of an "end of time" (DR 94, 115) in relation to the third synthesis, to indicate, as Arkady Plotnitsky (2015: 140-141) recognises, that this synthesis "is no longer 'time' at all in any sense we can give to such a concept".
[63] DR 89.
[64] DR 89.

Philosophy, is neither "historical" nor "of the present".[65] Instead, this untimely synthesis is that "discontinuity" or interruption that always acts counter to the continuity of the present and the historical: "namely, complete metamorphosis, the irreducibly unequal."[66] But if this untimely caesura that Deleuze identifies with the third synthesis lacks any historical or empirical content, what kind of repetition does it then create? For Deleuze, this repetition must be conceived in terms of Nietzsche's conception of the eternal return.[67] On this conception, that which repeats in the third synthesis is never similarity but always *difference* itself.[68] But once again, this difference has no essential grounding in the actual or historical, for that would be to again collapse the distinction between the second and third syntheses.[69] What returns in the third synthesis is rather an irreducible difference that is 'prior' to the orders of the actual and the historical.[70] What returns is difference understood as *intensity*: "the eternal return is neither qualitative nor extensive but intensive, purely intensive."[71] This means, in accordance with Deleuze's broader definition of intensity, that what repeats in the eternal return is an "inequality" or "difference of potential" that is both irreducible and 'prior' to the explication it receives in the states of quality and extensity.[72] In this sense, repetition in the eternal return is never the return of actual historical facts, agents or identities. What returns in the third synthesis is always a "properly chaotic world *without identity* (….) [which] excludes both the coherence of a subject which represents itself and that of an object

[65] "Following Nietzsche we discover, as more profound than time and eternity, the untimely: philosophy is neither a philosophy of history, nor a philosophy of the eternal, but untimely, always and always untimely—that is to say, 'acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.'" DR xxi; NP 107.
[66] NP 107; DR 242.
[67] Deleuze is here drawing on his earlier reading of eternal return in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, which states that "the eternal return is linked, not to a repetition of the same, but on the contrary, to a transmutation. It is the moment or the eternity of becoming which eliminates all that resists it." NP xv-xx, 24-29, 46-49, 68-72, 189-198.
[68] "The eternal return does cause the same and the similar to return, but is itself derived from a world of pure difference." DR 125.
[69] "In this manner, the [Bergsonian] ground [of memory] has been superseded by a groundlessness, a universal ungrounding which turns upon itself and causes only the yet-to-come [*à venir*] to return." DR 91.
[70] Somers-Hall, 2013: 83.
[71] DR 243.
[72] For Deleuze's general definition of intensity, see: DR 222-223.

represented."[73] What returns is difference understood as the system of the "dissolved self [*moi dissous*]", that is, as the system where the self's coherence and identity are necessarily "expunged" and where what is produced and affirmed is always "the absolutely new itself".[74]

Deleuze's claim with regard to the third synthesis is that as subjects we are always in a certain sense passive with respect to its creative affirmation of difference. "The eternal return affirms difference, it affirms dissemblance, disparateness, change, multiplicity and becoming", and this affirmation is something that just *happens to us* as subjects whether we are conscious of this or not.[75] As James Williams writes: "We are passive with respect to this sense of chancing [brought about by the eternal return]—it does not have to be a conscious component of creative acts."[76] However, just like for Bergson the intuition has many senses, so too, for Deleuze, the proposition that the eternal return affirms difference "means many things."[77] And beyond signifying the creation that just happens to us, that proposition also means that difference in the eternal return must become "an object of affirmation (…) that it is creation but also that it must [*doit*] be created, as affirming difference, as being difference in itself."[78] In other words, there is also a *practical* ethical injunction at the heart of Deleuze's ontological conception of time as eternal return.[79] Although a passivity to the eternal return's affirmation of difference is, to repeat, a necessary aspect of our existence as subjects, it is also, for Deleuze, equally necessary—this time from an *ethical* standpoint—that we create ourselves as the repetitious soul or Self that affirms difference *as* difference in itself.[80] For only thus, to borrow a famous expression from *The Logic of Sense*, can we "become worthy of what happens to us."[81] Only by actively creating ourselves as a repetitious Self can we do justice to that constitutive ontological repetition to which we are in any case passively

[73] DR 57.
[74] DR 90.
[75] DR 300.
[76] Williams, 2003: 102.
[77] DR 55.
[78] DR 55.
[79] Williams, 2003: 105.
[80] DR 23. Nietzsche and Philosophy also upholds the inseparability of ethics and ontology, claiming that eternal return is a principle of both ontological and ethical selection. NP xvii-xviii, 68-72.
[81] LS 149.

exposed. However, while we have so far seen that Deleuze's conception of the eternal return abounds with characters to whom repetition happens (e.g. Hamlet and Oedipus), we also seem no closer to clarifying what kind of ethical action would make us worthy of its affirmation of difference in itself. On this score, as I have said, the only clues that Deleuze provides revolve around the undoubtedly obscure notion of the differenciator or dark precursor of difference.[82] It is this agent's activity, we are told, that relates different to different so as to affirm difference in the eternal return.[83] But we still need to explain how and why, for Deleuze, this differenciator's activity provides an ethical model for the affirmation of difference in the eternal return. To this task I now turn.

5.2. How to affirm the eternal return

The idea of structure is markedly absent from Deleuze's writings on Bergson. Yet, it is precisely in structuralist terms that Deleuze explicates the concept of a differenciator of difference in *Difference and Repetition*. Now, Deleuze begins to properly introduce this concept by asking what sort of "systems [are] constituted [*affectés*] by the eternal return".[84] For systems to be constituted in this manner, Deleuze answers, they must avoid making identity and resemblance primary: "difference must [*il faut*] immediately relate the differing terms to one another (….) difference must [*Il faut*] be articulation and connection in itself".[85] For this to be possible, however, there must be *something* in these systems that enables differences to immediately relate to one another. There must be an "agent [*agent*]" or a "force" that is responsible for ensuring this immediate communication between differences.[86] And this agent is precisely what Deleuze calls the differenciator of difference. For eternal return to operate in a system, "[t]here must [*Il faut*] be a differenciation of difference, an in itself which like a *differenciator*, a *Sich-unterscheidende*, by virtue of which the different is

[82] DR 117; cf. Deleuze, 2004c: 97-98.
[83] DR 116-128.
[84] DR 116.
[85] DR 117.
[86] DR 119.

gathered all at once rather than represented on condition of a prior resemblance, identity, analogy or opposition."[87]

In the context of Deleuze's discussion of eternal return, this emphasis on a differenciator of difference is certainly striking. But it is not entirely without precedent in his philosophy.[88] In his earlier "How Do We Recognise Structuralism?"—a 1967 essay devoted to articulating the philosophical overlaps between structuralist figures as varied as Lévi-Strauss, Althusser and Lacan—Deleuze had already insisted on the importance of the "differenciating role [*rôle différenciateur*]" played by the "differenciator [*différenciant*] of difference itself."[89] Specifically, in that text Deleuze contends that without this notion of a differenciator we can provide only an abstract account of the productive role that structures play in creating worldly diversity.[90] Like the pure past of the second synthesis, Deleuze argues, these structures must be understood in terms of the virtual. This means that though structures have a reality, this reality "does not merge with any actual reality [*réalité actuelle*], any present or past actuality [*actualité*]."[91] Instead, structures must be regarded as virtual systems that are composed of both differential relations and points of singularity.[92] Within a virtual structure, these differential relations and singular points are distributed or articulated in two or more "series", which constantly interact with one another to reciprocally determine the value and place of their respective virtual points and relations.[93] A good example of such a structure is the relation between *dx* and *dy* in one of the essential functions of differential calculus: dx/dy = -

[87] DR 117.
[88] Deleuze's early texts on Bergson attribute an "internal explosive force" to the virtual totality of duration—a force said to cause the latter's "differentiation" into diverse or ramified series. This attribution resonates with the concept of a differenciator in both *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*. However, in the writings on Bergson, the precise nature of that force remains relatively vague and undefined. And only with the help of structuralism—and, will see shortly, Gilbert Simondon—is Deleuze able to clarify the nature of that internal force as the "empty [*vide*]" and "always displaced" element that makes the entire process of differenciation function. Deleuze, 2004a: 27; Deleuze, 2004b: 40; B 94; cf. LS 48-51; HRS 184-189.
[89] HRS 180, 186 (translation of *différenciant* modified). For a bibliographic account of this piece, see: Stolze, 1998: 51-63.
[90] HRS 182, 180.
[91] HRS 178.
[92] HRS 177; LS 50.
[93] "One must state simply that every structure is serial, multi-serial, and would not function without this condition." HR 182-183; LS 50.

x/y.[94] In this function, "dy is totally undetermined in relation to y, and dx is totally undetermined in relation to x: each one has neither existence, nor value, nor signification. And yet the relation dy/dx is totally determined, the two elements determining each other reciprocally in the relation."[95]

Once again, though, for this differential determination within structures (differen*t*iation) to be possible, and indeed, for the virtual relations and singularities within a structure to become "incarnated" or "actualised" in actual terms and realities (differen*c*iation), *something* else must drive the entire process forward.[96] Deleuze's essay on structuralism admits that the factor responsible for animating structures in this way is "seemingly quite strange."[97] Nevertheless, this factor *can* be specified as a "wholly paradoxical object or element" which operates as a point of convergence where the series within a structure communicate with one another across their *differences*.[98] Like the "empty square [*case vide*]" in a fifteen-puzzle, this element is a kind of mobile place without value *around which* the distribution of a virtual structure can be arranged and determined: "it is in relation to [this] object that the variety of terms and the variation of differential relations are determined in each case".[99] Deleuze tells us that for each structural order, this paradoxical element or "object=x is not at all something unknowable, something purely undetermined [*inconnaissable, un pur indéterminé*]."[100] In any given structure, this object can be determined, just as its role can be "fulfilled by quite diverse determinations [*déterminations très diverses*]."[101] To play the role of a mobile empty square, however, this object=x cannot be fixed *within* any particular series; it must "circulate in them, and from one to another, with an extraordinary agility."[102] Similarly, the success of this object's role depends on its not holding any particular identity, just as it depends on its

[94] HRS 176; LS 50; DR 170-176.
[95] HRS 176.
[96] "We call the determination of the virtual content of an Idea [or structure] differen*t*iation; we call the actualisation of a virtuality into species and distinct parts differen*c*iation." DR 207.
[97] HRS 182-183.
[98] HRS 184; LS 40-41, 50-51, 66-67.
[99] HRS 184; LS 40, 51.
[100] HRS 188.
[101] DR 119.
[102] HRS 184.

independence from any form of actuality. Deleuze repeatedly exemplifies this mobility and independence by appealing to Lacan's notion of the "phallus".[103] Like Lacan's phallus, this paradoxical object should not be equated with any "given [*donée*]" or "empirical determination [*détermination empirique*]".[104] Distinguishing this object=x is instead its capacity for always being "that which does not coincide with its own identity, always found there where it is not where one looks for it, always displaced in relation to itself".[105] It is, moreover, because this object=x retains this mobility and independence in relation to the actual that it is capable of playing the role of the *differenciator* of structures. As Deleuze puts it: "The whole structure is driven by this originary Third, which fails to coincide with its own origin. Distributing the differences through the entire structure, making the differential relations vary with its displacements, the object=x constitutes the differenciator [*le différenciant*] of difference itself."[106]

For Deleuze, some version of this framework between virtual structures and their differenciator is operative in the work of most worthy structuralist thinkers. This framework is not, however, simply a useful heuristic device for grasping how structures function to generate diversity in the world.[107] Indeed, on Deleuze's reading, structuralism is inseparable not only from the frameworks that it creates, "but also from a practice in relation to the products that it interprets."[108] This means that beyond its useful account of genesis, structuralism also provides a model for ethical *practice* that is adequate to that genetic process' differential demands.[109] Now, since structuralism dictates that things are most mobile at the precise point where the differenciator operates, it is also there, at that level, that this future-directed ethical practice must install itself. As Deleuze puts it: "It is always as a function of the empty square [or differenciator] that the differential relations [in structures]

[103] cf. Lacan, 2006: 575-584.
[104] HRS 187; cf. DR 103-107.
[105] HRS 187; LS 51.
[106] HRS 186 (translation modified). "But above all, we can conclude that there is no structure without the empty square, which makes everything function." LS 51.
[107] Deleuze writes: "'structuralism' seems to us the only means by which a genetic method can achieve its ambitions." DR 183.
[108] HRS 191.
[109] Structuralism provides "the criteria of the future." HRS 192.

are open to new values and variations, and the singularities capable of new distributions, constitutive of another structure. (….) This mutation point [therefore] precisely defines a praxis, or rather the very site where a praxis must take hold [*doit s'installer*]."[110] That is, far from altogether dispensing with the question of subjectivity, and specifically, with the question of what an *ethical* subjectivity looks like, structuralism merely reconfigures and disperses its terms.[111] Under such dispersion, to become an ethical subject is, for Deleuze, precisely to become—or to play the role of—the differenciator of structures. It is to become what Deleuze calls "a structuralist hero", that is, someone who deploys their "power to cause relations to vary and to redistribute singularities, always casting another throw of the dice."[112]

Returning to *Difference and Repetition*, we see that this engagement with structuralism also frames Deleuze's conception of how the eternal return is affirmed. Directly after his claim that there must be a differenciator for a given system to be constituted by the eternal return, Deleuze writes:

> Under what other conditions does difference develop this in-itself as a 'differenciator', and gather the different outside of any possible representation? The first characteristic seems to us to be organisation in a series. A system must be constituted on the basis of two or more series, each series being defined by the differences between the terms which compose it. If we suppose that the series communicate under the impulse of a force of some kind, then it is apparent that this communication relates differences to other differences, constituting differences between differences within the system. These second-degree differences play the role of the 'differenciator'—in other words, they relate the first-degree differences to one another. The nature of these elements (…) can be determined: these are intensities, the peculiarity of intensities being to be constituted by a difference which itself refers to other differences (...). The intensive character of the systems considered should not prejudice their being characterised as mechanical, physical, biological, psychic, social, aesthetic, or philosophical, etc.[113]

[110] HRS 191. Or, as *The Logic of Sense* puts this: "Today's task is to make the empty square circulate and to make pre-individual and nonpersonal singularities speak—in short, to produce sense." LS 73.
[111] HRS 190.
[112] HRS 191; cf. NP 25-27. For more on this structuralist hero, see: Bowden, 2011: 172-173.
[113] DR 117.

Broad similarities appear between this passage and some key notions that Deleuze 'recognises' in structuralism. Although Deleuze here opts for the term "system", he nonetheless insists that, like structures, these systems must be constituted on the basis of two or more series.[114] Moreover, each of these series is composed of terms or differences that have an existence only insofar as they communicate with one another. Finally, and this is for Deleuze "the most important point", there is here likewise an agent or force that ensures this communication between the series within a system.[115] As Deleuze writes, "every system contains its dark precursor which ensures the communication of peripheral series. (….) Given two heterogeneous series, two series of differences, the precursor plays the part of the differenciator of these differences. In this manner, by virtue of its own power, it puts them into immediate [*immédiatement*] relation to one another."[116] And once again, for Deleuze, it is important to recall that though this differenciator takes up a diversity of determinations (as physical, biological, social, etc.), it nonetheless has "no identity other than that which it lacks: it is precisely the object=x, the one which is 'lacking in its place' as it lacks its own identity."[117]

These broad similarities aside, there are also two crucial differences between the structuralism of *Difference and Repetition* and that of Deleuze's earlier essay on the topic. First, Deleuze extensively reframes the concept of structures as "Ideas".[118] Taking his cue from Kant, Deleuze defines Ideas as *problematic* complexes or multiplicities, doing so in part to suggest that such Ideas are not given as objects of empirical experience.[119] Ideas are *virtual*: they do not possess an actual existence, and "we must avoid giving the elements and relations which form [their] structure an actuality which they do not have."[120] This virtual

[114] For Deleuze, the distinction between "systems" and "structures" is insignificant from the perspective of structuralism: HRS 170.
[115] LS 40.
[116] DR 119.
[117] DR 119-120.
[118] For an excellent account of Deleuzian Ideas, see: Somers-Hall, 2013: 128-166.
[119] DR 163. Deleuze is here redeploying Kant's (1998: A327/B384-A328/B385) assertion that concepts of reason, despite exceeding the bounds of experience, nonetheless "remain as a problem without any solution."
[120] DR 209.

existence notwithstanding, the content of these Ideas can be precisely specified. Echoing his earlier definition of systems, Deleuze writes that each problematic "Idea is a system of differential relations between differential elements, a system of differential relations between genetic elements."[121] Moreover, Deleuze argues that "[t]hese elements must in effect be determined, but reciprocally, by reciprocal relations which allow no independence whatsoever to subsist."[122] Now introducing a more rigorous description of this process, Deleuze also insists that the determination of virtual Ideas is essentially related to a movement of "actualisation or differenciation".[123] As he puts it: "A multiple ideal connection, a differential *relation*, must be actualised in diverse spatio-temporal *relationships*, at the same time as its *elements* are actually incarnated in a variety of *terms* and forms."[124] This process of actualisation proceeds in two distinct directions, "one concerning the qualities or diverse species which actualise the varieties [of differential relations within a structure], the other concerning the number or the distinct parts actualising [its] singular points."[125] Insofar as Ideas are actualised in these two ways, their differential relations and singularities are not simply differen*t*iated (t) among themselves at the level of the virtual; they are also differen*c*iated (c) by becoming actualised or incarnated in actual, empirical and extensive species and parts.[126] This entire set of conditions helps to define an Idea as a structure.[127] But once again, as it stands, this conception of structure remains incomplete, for "we need a third thing which determines the Idea to actualise itself, to incarnate itself in a particular way."[128] We still need to explain why an Idea actualises itself into *this* or *that* species or *this* or *that* part. We still need a third element—that is, a differenciator—providing "the differenciation of differenciation."[129]

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[121] DR 181.
[122] DR 183.
[123] DR 212.
[124] DR 183.
[125] DR 210.
[126] "Differenciation is like the second part of difference, and in order to designate the integrity or the integrality of the object we require the complex notion of different/*ciation*." DR 209.
[127] DR 183.
[128] Deleuze, 2004c: 102.
[129] DR 217.

In a second, more decisive alteration, Deleuze now configures this 'third' that determines the differenciation of virtual Ideas as *intensive*. The notion of intensity is entirely absent from Deleuze's essay in structuralism, but in *Difference and Repetition*, as noted, the second-degree elements that play the role of a differenciator within a system can be determined as *intensities*. Deleuze shores up this equation between intensity and the differenciator with a reference to Gilbert Simondon's notion of "disparation [*disparation*]".[130] On Simondon's conception, the disparate can be described as a field of "tension" where an "information" that is irreducible to the forms of the given is made to *circulate* or *communicate* between two distinct realities.[131] Taking this schema further and substituting its informational vocabulary for a notion of "signs", Deleuze argues that insofar as this notion of a field of disparation implies a "fundamental *difference*, like a state of dissymmetry" between two differing orders, it can "be assimilated to a theory of intensive quanta, since each intensive quantum is itself a difference."[132] Every intensive quantity, as noted above, refers to a difference of potential that cannot in itself be equalised or cancelled. Like an irrational number that cannot be resolved into an integer or whole number, these intensive quantities are a sort of inequality to which no determined quality corresponds.[133] They are the 'remainder' that is 'prior' to every quality, and more generally, to the states of extension within which those qualities find themselves explicated.[134] Now, in this context, Deleuze argues that what Simondon allows us to see is that the 'third' element by which differenciation is differenciated is *itself* intensive. Indeed, if, Simondon's conception of the disparate is reducible to the concept of intensive quantity, then it is in "*disparateness* as it is determined and comprised in difference of intensity, in intensity as difference", that the differenciator of difference operates.[135] More simply, we might say that the differenciator can now be treated as the *intensive* factor that is responsible for the differenciation of structures.

[130] DR 120. For more the importance of Simondon's conception for *Difference and Repetition*, see: Sauvagnargues, 2016: 61-84.
[131] Simondon, 2013: 31.
[132] Deleuze, 2004d: 87; DR 20, 222.
[133] DR 238; cf. NP 42-44.
[134] Lawlor, 2019: 449.
[135] DR 222-223.

In part, Deleuze adopts this notion of intensity because he sees it providing a way of avoiding what he calls "the most important difficulty" pertaining to the differenciator's functioning within a structure.[136] We have already noted Deleuze's stipulation that—in order to play its proper function within a structure—the differenciator cannot have any identity, just as it cannot find itself grounded in any empirical or actual order. *Difference and Repetition* reframes this stipulation as a question: "When we speak of communication between heterogeneous systems, of coupling and resonance, does this not imply a minimum of resemblances between the series, and an identity in the agent which brings about the communication?"[137] Now, significantly, it is the concept of intensity that enables Deleuze to provide a negative answer to this question. As noted above, one of intensity's central characteristics is its irreducibility to the states of extensity and quality that make up the order of the actual.[138] "Intensity is primarily implicated in itself", meaning that "intensity is neither divisible, like extensive quantity, nor indivisible, like quality."[139] Instead, intensity is that "original depth" or "*spatium*" that operates as "the transcendental principle" *out of which* extensive or empirical quantities and qualities emerge.[140] As the principle of these extensive states, this depth should not be confused with the third dimension of space. Indeed, as

[136] DR 120.
[137] DR 119.
[138] There is an ongoing debate within Deleuze studies as to whether the intensive can be classified as actual or virtual, with authors like Dale Clisby (2015: 127-149) and John Roffe (2012: 142-143) upholding the former position, and others, like Peter Hallward (2006: 48-49) and Williams (2003: 178), upholding the latter. Unfortunately, here I cannot extensively consider the respective merits of each of these positions.

However, given the repeated equation Deleuze establishes between the actual and identity (cf. DR 107, 116, 120-123, 209, 228-232, 240-241), and given his oft-restated assertion that the intensive is, precisely, *irreducible* to the states of quality and extensity within which the illusion of identity always manifests itself (cf. DR 119-120, 241-244), it seems unlikely that Deleuze takes the intensive to be straightforwardly related to the actual. This is not to suggest that the intensive is necessarily virtual, either. Indeed, if, as I have done in this chapter, we uphold that the intensive is just what Deleuze calls the differenciator of difference, then following Deleuze's specification for that differenciator, the intensive, though it "belongs" to virtual structures (in the sense that it "circulates in" and "through" those structures), also possesses "another nature" in relation to them (cf. HRS 184-186). Said differently, although the intensive is perhaps more on the side of the virtual than that of the actual, it nonetheless remains a "Third" element in relation to those two realms. Or, as Widder (2019: 7) has recently expressed this point: "Intensity is inseparable from the Idea's differential structure, but it resides within it as something different from it: intensity, we could say, is included in the Idea but cannot be accounted for by the Idea—it is the Idea's and therefore thought's immanent Outside."
[139] DR 237.
[140] DR 230. In Latin, the term *spatium* indicates not only a space or distance, but also a course that circles around itself (like a circuit), and an interval of time. In these respects, as Widder (forthcoming: 15) notes, the *spatium* can be equated with the third synthesis' caesura.

Deleuze stresses, "[e]xtensity can emerge from the depths only if depth is definable independently [*indépendamment*] of extensity."[141] Now, it is true that *as it explicates itself*—that is, *as* it gives rise to the qualities and quantities of the extended—this pure *spatium* tends to become mixed with the particular forms of the actual or the empirical.[142] To that extent, there is a "transcendental illusion" that is tied to the process by which intensive quantities give rise to the determined dimensions of actual existence.[143] This illusion allows intensive quantities to become aligned with the figures of good sense and common sense—as in traditional thermodynamics.[144] "This illusion, however, is not intensity itself, but rather the movement by which difference in intensity is cancelled."[145] This means that *in itself*, intensity remains a "*pure* implex" or a "*pure spatium*" that is freed from all forms of identity and the identical.[146] In itself, intensity "is the transcendental principle which maintains itself in itself, beyond the reach of the empirical principle."[147] As such, it is *as* intensive that the differenciator can play its proper role as that which differenciates difference without resemblance or identity. As an intensive agent, the differenciator can truly be "said of a world the very ground of which is difference, in which everything rests upon disparities, upon differences of differences which reverberate to infinity (the world of intensity)."[148]

No less decisively, equating the differenciator with intensity also enables Deleuze to develop a more precise account of how that agent plays a determinant role in the different/ciation of virtual Ideas. To the question of how the Idea is determined to actualise itself into differenciated qualities and extensities, Deleuze responds: "the answer lies

[141] DR 230.
[142] This argument echoes Bergson's claim that the continuity of life (or intuition) eventually crystallises itself into stratified, discrete and stable entities (or concepts). This is not to suggest that Deleuze's treatment of intensity remains Bergsonian, as Craig Lundy (2017: 174-194) has recently argued. Indeed, Deleuze's structuralist framing of intensity as the site within which *structures* are different/ciated, his emphasis on individuation as the "essential process" of intensity, his focus on intensive individuals, and his equation between intensity and eternal return, all mark irreducible points of divergence from Bergson's philosophy.
[143] DR 240.
[144] DR 223-228.
[145] DR 240.
[146] DR 229-230 (emphasis on "pure" added).
[147] DR 241.
[148] DR 241.

precisely in the intensive quantities. Intensity is the determinant in the process of actualisation."[149] Now, intensity plays "this determinant role" precisely because it possesses "its own essential process", the process of individuation.[150] Once again relying on Simondon, Deleuze argues that individuation is precisely the act by which the differential communication between disparate series is established. [151] By establishing this communication, individuation functions as "the act by which intensity determines differential relations to become actualised, along the lines of differenciation and within the qualities and extensities it creates."[152] Deleuze exemplifies this process of individuation with a reference to embryology, holding that an egg can be considered an intensive "site" where only a range of very special movements and transfers occur.[153] These movements "create or trace a space corresponding to the differential relations and to the singularities to be actualised."[154] Significantly, these movements are also entirely irreducible to that which they differenciate or actualise. Indeed, as Deleuze famously states, the "achievement of the embryo is to live the unlivable, to sustain forced movements which would break any [already-actualised] skeleton".[155] This is not to suggest that *no* subjects occupy individuating fields like the egg. "There are indeed actors and subjects, but these are larvae, since they alone are capable of sustaining the lines, the slippages and the rotations."[156]

Once again deploying Simondon, Deleuze argues that these subjects that constitute fields of individuation should be classified as intensive "individuals".[157] These individuals are not to be understood as qualified or extended.[158] Neither is the individual to be equated with the personological figures of the constituted "I [*Je*]" or "Self [*Moi*]", for these are only the

[149] DR 245.
[150] DR 246.
[151] DR 246.
[152] DR 246.
[153] DR 214, 250.
[154] DR 216.
[155] DR 215.
[156] DR 219, cf. 118-119.
[157] Deleuze (2004c: 86, 89) attributes this conception of an individual who is "contemporaneous" with individuation to Simondon, whilst also calling into question the extent to which the latter's ethical focus on the trans-individual "has not reintroduced the form of the Self which he had averted with his theory of disparity."
[158] DR 247.

distorted figures that individuality assumes once it has already been differenciated or explicated.[159] Fundamentally belonging to the order of the dissolved self, the individual "is distinguished from the I and the Self just as the intense order of implications is distinguished from the extensive and qualitative order of explication."[160] As such, the individual is not to be taken as an actual person with stable, constituted and determined qualities or attributes.[161] By contrast, the individual possesses only the following positive characteristics: "indeterminate [*indéterminé*], floating, fluid, communicative".[162] Moreover, this individual's individuality "is intensive, and therefore serial, stepped and communicating, comprising and affirming in itself the difference in intensities by which it is constituted."[163] This means that within an individuating field, the individual is that which—by virtue of its intensive nature—establishes the communication between disparate series within a given field of individuation. The individual "undertakes forced movements, constitutes internal resonances and dramatises the primordial relation of life", and as such is precisely the *agent* that carries out the act of individuation for a given field of disparation.[164] The individual is he who makes use of all his power for mobility and communication to determine the simultaneous differen*t*/*c*iation of Ideas.[165] In this manner, the intensive individual here emerges as the differenciator of differences within a system of disparateness. Indeed, if Ideas find their actualisation only as a result of the activity of a differenciator providing the differenciation of differenciation, it is always an intensive individual—taken as an indeterminate, floating and communicative agent—who plays that determinant role.

But if this account of intensity fills out Deleuze's notion of what plays the determinant role of the differenciator within a system, how is this entire schema related to the affirmation of

[159] "This is because the I is inseparable from a form of identity, while the Self is indistinguishable from a matter constituted by a continuity of resemblances." DR 257.
[160] DR 258.
[161] DR 38.
[162] DR 258.
[163] DR 246.
[164] DR 250. Deleuze elsewhere defines the individual as "a *milieu* of individuation." Deleuze, 2004d: 86 (translation modified).
[165] The individual "is he who makes use of the [intensive] power of the clear and the confused, of the clear-confused, in order to think Ideas in all their [differential] power as the distinct-obscure." DR 254.

eternal return? In short, intensity and the play of individuation that it essentially involves is *precisely* the 'site' within which the temporality of eternal return is affirmed or repeated. As we have already seen Deleuze starkly claim: "The eternal return is neither qualitative nor extensive but intensive, purely intensive."[166] Now equipped with the notion of individuation, we can provide a better explanation for this identity between eternal return and the intensive. In effect, the eternal return is affirmed in intensity because the only 'things' that pass or return through the latter's individuating *spatiums* are those differences that maintain themselves beyond the reach of empirical principles. In the intensive *spatium*, only these "communicating intensities, differences of differences" return because only they are capable of passing through the "unqualified abyss" of individuation.[167] "What does not return is that which denies eternal return, that which does not pass the test. It is quality and extensity which do not return, insofar as within them difference, the condition of eternal return, is cancelled."[168] Thus, intensity and its essential process of individuation constitute the true occasion for the repetition of eternal return: "while the laws of nature govern the surface of the world, the eternal return ceaselessly rumbles in this other dimension of the transcendental or volcanic *spatium*."[169] It is thus through intensive individuation that an untimely difference without empirical content repeats and interrupts both the present and the historical: "intensity *affirms* difference."[170] Any ethical practice attempting to affirm the eternal return must therefore take shape as "an ethics of intensive quantities", just as it must adopt the following maxim as its first principle: "affirm even the lowest."[171] Affirm even the lowest, that is, precisely because it is always at the level of an intensive depth (a depth *lower* than any actual quality or extension) that difference shows itself as *differing* or as relating itself to itself without any mediation whatsoever by the identical.[172]

On the basis of Deleuze's pronouncements on intensity, we can also further specify

[166] DR 243.
[167] DR 243, 258.
[168] DR 243.
[169] DR 241.
[170] DR 234.
[171] DR 234, 244.
[172] DR 234-235.

'Who' is capable of practically engendering this ethical affirmation of eternal return.[173] Here, the stakes are clarified by the equation Deleuze establishes between the individual and the differenciator. Indeed, if the individual is the precisely differenciating agent who "by virtue of its power" puts the differences that circulate within a given field of individuation "into immediate relation to one another", then the individual is also the ethical subject *who we must become* if we wish to practically affirm the eternal return.[174] As Deleuze unequivocally puts it: "The thinker, undoubtedly the thinker of eternal return, *is* the individual, the universal individual."[175] To become worthy of the eternal return's affirmation of difference in itself, it is therefore the figure of the individual that we must practically involve or implicate ourselves *with*. "The multiple, mobile, and communicating character of individuality, its implicated character, must [*faut-il*] therefore be constantly recalled."[176] This does not mean that we must seek to entirely abandon our extended and qualified nature as subjects. Deleuze recognises the futility of such a project by writing that its only possible outcome would be our own deaths as ethical subjects.[177] Nevertheless, the ontological relation between the individual and the eternal return places upon us an ethical injunction to relate ourselves *only* to those aspects of existence which properly speaking affirm difference. In Deleuze's terminology, this injunction can be framed in terms of a "second rule" for the ethics of intensive quantities: "do not explicate oneself (too much)".[178] Though it is vital that we do not *overdo* our implication with the realm of intensity—that we do not let the ethics of intensive quantities "become a demolition job"—we must nevertheless also not seek to relate ourselves to the order of explication, that is, to the order of the actual and to the qualities

[173] Like Williams (2003: 184), I believe that "Deleuze's work on intensities allows him to begin to answer the question of practical action raised throughout [his] book." Particularly, individuation enables Deleuze to specify the Self of repetition who engenders the repetition of eternal return: "Individuation is what responds to the question 'Who?' (…) 'Who?' is always an intensity." DR 246.
[174] DR 119; cf. HRS 191; LS 107-108, 178-180.
[175] DR 254 (emphasis added).
[176] DR 254.
[177] True individuality "can be experienced only at the borders of the livable, under conditions beyond which it would entail the death of any well-constituted subject endowed with independence and activity." DR 118.
[178] DR 244.

and extensities that constitute it.[179] From an ethical perspective, this order of explication holds no particular value; it can count as little more than a 'by-product' of a deeper and more significant interplay of difference.[180] More crucial from an ethical perspective is the task of relating oneself to the *implicated* order of intensity that lingers, as it were, as "a fringe of indetermination" beneath our actual existence.[181] As Deleuze writes, "[w]e are made of all these depths and distances, of these intensive souls" that express the fluid and mobile character of individuality.[182] And it is precisely with these indeterminate intensive souls that we must contend, or, more generally, become, if we also want to create ourselves as the repetitious Self of eternal return. For only these individuating souls (as opposed to our actual, empirical souls) can make differences communicate in a way that immediately relates different to different. Only these intensive souls can carry out a differenciation of the different without mediation. As such, only they can guide us in the ethical task of affirming that most disjointed of temporalities—the temporality of the eternal return.

With all this in mind, we now can offer a more precise view of what Deleuze's temporal ethics in *Difference and Repetition* involves. To practically affirm the eternal return and its absolute novelty, we must create ourselves as differenciators of difference, that is, as intensive individuals. This ethics of making oneself an intensive differenciator does not simply involve the "creation of affects and perceptions"—a simplifying gloss that commentators are sometimes guilty of imparting to Deleuze's ethical thought.[183] More in line with Deleuze's structuralist emphasis in *Difference and Repetition*, we should say that that ethics involves creating oneself as a system "in which different relates different to different by means of *difference* itself (…). It is a matter of difference in the series, and of differences

[179] LS 157.
[180] "Extensity, quality, limitation, opposition indeed designate realities, but the form which difference assumes here is illusory. Difference pursues its subterranean life while its image reflected by the surface is scattered." DR 240.
[181] DR 258.
[182] DR 254.
[183] Colebrook (2008: 136), for example, simplifies the structuralist connotations of Deleuze's ethical argument when she writes that "an ethics of intensive quantities would be oriented towards acting and intervening in the creation of affects and perceptions".

of differences in the communication between series."[184] In other words, we should say that this ethics involves creating oneself as the indeterminate and fluid differenciator who establishes the simultaneous differenc/tiation of the differences within the virtual structures that surround us. Indeed, it is only by playing this role of the differenciator *of* structures—that is, by becoming this intensive individual who simultaneously determines the differen*t*iation and differen*c*iation of the relations and singularities within virtual structures—that we can begin to do justice to the intensive nature of difference, and that we can thereby begin to affirm the temporal repetition of difference in itself that is the eternal return.

5.3. Structures *and* machines

I have stressed Deleuze's reliance on structuralism not simply because of the practical importance he himself attaches to that paradigm. In a certain sense, this reliance on structuralism is also what unites Deleuze's ethical thought with the problem of history that I have thus far explored in this thesis. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to approach this problem from the perspective of Guattari's joint review of *Difference and Repetition* and the *Logic of Sense*: "Machine and Structure." The importance of this text for the entire trajectory of Deleuze's ethical thought cannot be underestimated.[185] Initially written in 1969 as a talk to Lacan's Freudian School in Paris, Guattari's review not only formed the occasion for Deleuze and Guattari's meeting in that same year.[186] Its insistence on "machinic" factors also begins to set the conceptual scene for the authors' joint project in *Capitalism in Schizophrenia*.[187] More vitally to my central focus in this thesis, Guattari's text also attempts to directly tackle the relation between structures, history and what Deleuze calls the differenciator of difference in *Difference and Repetition*. Broadly speaking, Guattari's argument is that for a structuralist philosophy like Deleuze's to succeed (both theoretically

[184] DR 300.
[185] Deleuze (2015a: 21) himself unequivocally pinpoints the text's importance in his Preface to Guattari's *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*.
[186] For more on the history of Guattari's piece, see: Dosse, 2010: 223-240.
[187] For an excellent analysis of the influence of Guattari's work on *Anti-Oedipus* in particular, see: Thornton, 2017: 454-474.

and practically), it must contend with the basic fact that what plays the "determinant" role of a differenciator within a structural system is always a *historical* factor that is both irreducible and external to that system: the machine.[188] In adopting this argument, Guattari in effect reminds Deleuze that structures are always "haunted [*hantée*]" by something historical, and in this sense, I argue here, he provides us with vital indications as to how Deleuze's own temporal ethics, in adopting a structuralist guise, remains more dependent on the order of actuality than the latter is perhaps willing to admit.[189] What, then, is Guattari's specific argument, and what implications does it raise for Deleuze's temporal ethics in *Difference and Repetition*?

We must begin by noting that "Machine and Structure" is not entirely unsympathetic to Deleuze's structuralist ethical programme. If Deleuze's ethics demands that we affirm the temporality of eternal return by making ourselves the intensive differenciators of the different/ciation of virtual structures, it certainly is not the case that Guattari opposes *all* aspects of this project. Neither is it accurate to claim that Guattari's text is entirely *anti*-structure.[190] Indeed, Guattari explicitly prefaces his text by arguing that the distinction he is "proposing between machine and structure is based solely on the way we use the words" and that, "in reality, a machine is inseparable from its structural articulations."[191] Structures, Guattari adds, are still fundamentally operative in society, and that includes "above all the State structure, which appears to be the keystone of dominant productive relations".[192] In this sense, an analysis of structures is still ethically and politically required. But the crucial task for such analysis is that "of setting up an institutional machine whose distinctive features would be a theory and practice that ensured its not having to depend on the various social structures".[193] Differently stated, structural analysis must have the goal of showing how affirmative ethical or political activity might proceed without becoming entrapped in the

[188] MS 322.
[189] MS 318 (translation modified).
[190] François Dosse (2010: 223) adopts this misreading of Guattari's text by claiming that it "might just as well have been entitled 'Machine Against Structure.'"
[191] MS 318.
[192] MS 328.
[193] MS 328.

ideological aspects of repressive social structures. “The revolutionary program,” Guattari insists, “should demonstrate proper subjective potential, and at every stage of the struggle, should make sure that it is fortified against any attempt to ‘structuralise’ that potential.”[194]

For Guattari, we can begin to approach this analytic task by introducing a conceptual distinction between structure and machine. Under this distinction, a structure is a system that “positions its elements by way of a system of references that relates each one to the others, in such a way that it can itself be related as an element to other structures.”[195] This type of system possesses an internal “agent of action [*fait subjectif*], whose definition here does not extend beyond this principle of reciprocal determination”.[196] As will be readily noticed, this definition of structure is not entirely different from Deleuze’s: the structure remains a system of relations that is determined by a factor that itself belongs to the structure. But for Guattari, beyond this order of structure, there also exist *other* differenciating factors that may be termed *machines*. Prima facie, these machines appear no different from what Deleuze calls the differenciator or dark precursor of difference. Indeed, as Guattari notes by citing *Difference and Repetition*, the machine relates “to the order of repetition ‘as a conduct and as a point of view concerning non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities.’”[197] Furthermore, “[t]he essence of the machine is precisely this function of detaching a signifier as arepresentative, [of operating] as a ‘differenciator [*différenciant*],’ as a causal break”.[198] But if the differenciator and the machine play an equivalent *differenciating* function for structures, there is also a decisive difference between them. Indeed, if Deleuze’s intensive differenciator fundamentally *belongs* to the order of structure as its ‘third’ element, Guattari’s machine, by contrast, is “different in kind from the structurally established order of things.”[199] The machine always plays the role of a differenciator from *outside* the structure: “the machine marks a date, a change, different from

[194] MS 329.
[195] MS 318.
[196] MS 318.
[197] MS 382n1. cf. DR 1.
[198] MS 322 (translation modified).
[199] MS 322.

a structural representation."[200]

The difference between what Guattari and Deleuze respectively call a differenciator is further marked from the perspective of history. As noted above, for Deleuze, one of the differenciator's essential features is its irreducible *indetermination* in relation to the actual domains the differenciation of which it determines. The differenciator is both *indeterminate* and *intensive*, which is exactly what enables it to play its differenciating function "independently" of any particular forms of actuality or extensity.[201] By contrast, for Guattari, the relation between the machine and history must be regarded as essential. As he writes, the history of technology is not only "dated by the existence at each stage of a particular type of machine", but machines themselves are related to one another on the basis of the technological history to which they belong.[202] "Yesterday's machine, today's and tomorrow's are not related in their structural determinations".[203] This entails that the function and diversity of machines cannot be understood simply on the basis of the determinant role that they play in relation to structures. Instead, that "determinant" role must *itself* be understood from the point of view of history and with regard to the actual relations of desire and production within which machines find themselves essentially implicated.[204] We cannot fail to relate the determinant power of machines to "what goes on in the world of industry, on the shop floor or in the manager's office, and what is happening in scientific research, and indeed in the world of literature and even of dreams."[205] Moreover, we must recognise that if change occurs in the world—if virtual structures become differenciated into actual diversity, to use Deleuze's more technical language—this is because this desiring and productive history that machines constitutively *implicate* always acts upon structures to create that

[200] MS 319.
[201] DR 230.
[202] MS 319. Guattari's focus on the history of technology is here indebted to Marx's claim that a "base" of productive economic relations always underpins cultural "superstructures". For more on Guattari's appropriation of this Marxist framework, see also: Guattari, 2015: 235-280.
[203] MS 319.
[204] MS 322. "The essence of the machine, as a factor of rupture (…) is that one cannot ultimately distinguish the unconscious subject of desire from the order of the machine itself." MS 326 (translation modified).
[205] MS 323.

change. “At a particular point in history desire becomes localised in the totality of structures.”[206] And *contra* Deleuze, it is this precise point that a successful account of repetition must incorporate if it is to respect “the peculiar positions of subjectivity in relation to events and to history.”[207] To explain the repetitious production of novelty, we cannot content ourselves with appealing to the operation of an *indeterminate* differenciator of structures.[208] Instead, we have to focus on how novelty is repeated by the determinant activity of a machine that is at once *external* to structures and *determinate* from the perspective of the actual, social, desiring, and productive relations to which it necessarily belongs. In short, we have to recognise, *pace* Deleuze, that what he calls the “third condition” for the repetition of the new, that is, the differenciator, “relates exclusively to the order of the machine” and to the social actuality that this order implies.[209]

The upshot of Guattari’s insistence on the machine is that Deleuze’s structuralist framework, in privileging only the operation of an indeterminate differenciator of structures, remains incapable of providing a successful account of repetition.[210] Ultimately, Guattari also expresses reservations regarding the type of ethical activity that is advocated by Deleuze's structuralist account of repetition. Specifically, the fundamental issue that upholding an indeterminate differenciator as an ethical model creates is the promotion of a strangely *apolitical* conception of ethics. Indeed, as Guattari writes, one can take an indeterminate differenciating agent as an ethical model only by also “deluding oneself with the idea that it is possible to base oneself on some structural space that existed before the breakthrough by the machine.”[211] But no element of a structure—not even its most paradoxical and mobile element—can ever be ‘purified’ from the activity of machines and the social history of

[206] MS 327.
[207] MS 318.
[208] Guattari himself does not quite formulate the problem in terms of *indetermination*. But I believe this inference is justified on the basis of his insistence that machines have a history. Retrospectively, as it were, this inference also finds further confirmation in Deleuze and Guattari's repeated insistence in *Anti-Oedipus* that desiring-machines always operate "under determinate [social] conditions (...) which is to say [as the authors playfully clarify] that *Homo historia* comes first." AO 33, cf. 287-288, 343.
[209] MS 382n1.
[210] Thornton, 2017: 461.
[211] MS 322.

desiring and productive relations that they imply; no such "pure" or purely indeterminate site exists.[212] And for Guattari, the risk that we run in positing the possibility and desirability of such a site is precisely the blind perpetuation of some of the most stagnant and oppressive features of contingent social structures. He writes: "Every rupture produced by the intrusion of a machine phenomenon is conjoined by the establishment of what one might call a *system of anti-production*, the representative mode specific to structure."[213] This means that differenciating agents, insofar as they are constitutively involved with a web of social structures and the ideological "group phantasies" (such as the family) that these encompass, always carry within them a tendency to also "repeat" elements of a repressive nature.[214] These differenciating agents can therefore create novel ruptures *as much* as they can operate as sites bearing only "the imprint of equivalence and identity" in relation to repressive social structures.[215] This is why it is crucial that we not only grasp machines in their actual specificity, but that we also *strategically* wed their functioning to a concrete historical analysis of the structures that they act in relation *to*: the proliferation of productive "machine effects upon structures could [not] really be achieved on the basis of only one 'theoretical practice.' It presupposes the development of a specific analytic praxis at every level of organisation of the struggle."[216] But without this strategic analysis, without relating the functioning of differenciating agents to the actuality that they constitutively implicate, we risk limiting their productive potential to repeat the new; we risk turning those agents into sites for the identitarian repetition of repressive social structures.[217]

But what reason do we have for accepting Guattari's points, particularly as they relate to Deleuze's conception of the intensive differenciator? Specifically, what evidence can we find in *Difference and Repetition* to confirm Guattari's view that a differenciating agent must always operate in relation to a determined historical situation? We must begin by recalling

[212] MS 322.
[213] MS 323 (translation modified).
[214] MS 323-324; cf. AO 33.
[215] MS 325.
[216] MS 329.
[217] MS 327.

that when Deleuze first introduces the concept of an intensive differenciator, he writes that its status as intensive "should not prejudice [its] being characterised as mechanical, physical, biological, psychic, social, aesthetic or philosophical, etc."[218] In short, Deleuze's point here is that within a system, the role of differenciator can be "fulfilled by quite diverse determinations."[219] Now, the key question that is raised by these assertions is the following: if the intensive differenciator is, as Deleuze repeatedly claims, 'prior' and independent to the differenciations that it engenders, how can it *also* take up this diversity of determinations? How can the intensive differenciator be judged as physical, biological, etc., if its operation as a principle of determination presupposes "nothing of what it engenders" and is always "beyond the reach of the empirical principle"?[220] Unfortunately, in the relevant passages of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze provides us with no clear guidelines with which to make this judgement regarding the differenciator's diversity. But at stake here is precisely Guattari's claim that differenciating agents always find themselves implicated with the historical. Indeed, the unavoidable conclusion here is that if Deleuze's differenciator is capable of taking up a diversity of determinations, this is because a certain *history* already enters into its constitution as the determinant principle of a system *prior to* the determinant role that it plays within that system. The differenciator takes up a variety of determinations because its role is partly defined by its implication with existing systems and the actuality that their pre-existence implies. In this sense, then, Guattari is justified in arguing that something *external* to structural systems—namely, a certain history—always "haunts" those systems, as if from the 'outside'.[221] And while we certainly cannot yet define this history as machinic, it nonetheless seems that in order to play the *diversity* of determinant functions that Deleuze attributes to it, his differenciating agent must, like Guattari's machine, find at least part of its sense in the constitutive relation that it entertains with a given order of

[218] DR 117-118.
[219] DR 119.
[220] LS 97; DR 241.
[221] cf. MS 318.

actuality.[222]

A similar conclusion imposes itself when we further examine Deleuze's claims regarding the specificity of differenciations that the differenciator is responsible for determining. We have repeatedly seen Deleuze write that if diversity exists in the world, this is because a differenciating agent (namely, an intensive individual) always determines the differential relations and points of singularity within Ideas to actualise themselves into certain species and parts. Now, Deleuze himself is acutely aware that for his genetic account to explain the emergence of diversity *without* foundationally appealing to identity and resemblance, it must also show that the *specific* conditions of emergence differ from *species to species* and from *part to part*. As Deleuze writes, to overcome this "principal difficulty", we cannot content ourselves with appealing to the operation of an individual differenciating agent "only formally and in general": we have to explain how *each* species and *each* part finds its own *individual* or *specific* conditions of individuation.[223] And to avoid this difficulty we must recognise two points. We must recognise, first, that individuating "individuals presuppose only Ideas"; that individuals determine the specific differenciation of species and parts only by *expressing* Ideal differential relations and their corresponding distinctive points.[224] Secondly, while intensive individuals "express the changing *totality* of Ideas", they "*clearly express only certain relations or certain degrees of variation*"; meanwhile, the remaining relations and points in the Ideal totality are still expressed, "but [only] *confusedly*."[225] And it is this variable relation of clarity/confusion with respect to the totality of Ideas that in turn specifies what diverse species or part an intensive individual will determine the differenciation *of*. For example, "the ass and the wolf can be considered species only in relation to the fields of individuation which clearly express them."[226]

Now, while this entire schema perhaps avoids appealing to individuating individuals only

[222] Relatedly, Hallward (2006: 158) criticises Deleuze for his "non-relational" (vis-à-vis the actual) conception of the differenciator of difference.
[223] DR 252.
[224] DR 252. For more on these points, see: Bowden, 2017: 230-231.
[225] DR 252 (emphasis added).
[226] DR 254.

formally and in general—in that their individuating role can now be distinguished according to the variable relation of Ideal clarity/confusion that they express—we continue to be faced with the problematic absence of an explanation for *how that variable relation is itself determined in each specific case.* Why does a given individual clearly express only those Ideal relations and singularities leading to the differenciated product 'wolf' as opposed to those leading to the differenciation 'ass'? This is what Deleuze's bold claim that individuals presuppose *only* Ideas fails to explain. Now, perhaps, Deleuze could have provided this explanation by insisting, with Simondon, that fields of individuation (and their corresponding intensive individuals) always operate in the context of a certain "historicity [*historicité*]."[227] He could have argued, that is, that individuals express a *specific* relation of clarify/confusion with regards to Ideas because their operation always carries with it an irreducible "historical aspect" that also explains *why* differing individuals are *predisposed* to determine certain forms of actualisation over others.[228] Alternatively, like Guattari, Deleuze could here have argued that an historical factor external to structure always operates to specify the variable determinant roles that a differenciating agent will play within that structure. However, as we have seen throughout this chapter, it is just this that Deleuze fails to do by claiming that an indeterminate differenciator *alone* can explain how the entirety of a structural system functions. True, Deleuze's appeal to a differenciator of difference does help to explain the functioning of structural systems, as even Guattari recognises. But crucially, it does not do so with the level of differential *specificity* that is demanded by *Difference and Repetition*'s own ontological aims; it does not do so without unwittingly invoking a resemblance and identity between a diversity of differenciating agents. In this sense, Guattari is therefore justified in arguing that Deleuze's account of repetition will remain unsatisfactory for as long

[227] Simondon (2013: 57, 79-84, 167, 268) insists that each of the fields of individuation that he explores (physical, biological and psychosocial) possesses its *own particular form of historicity*. Not only does the individuation of physical systems "start from a singularity of a historical nature" insofar as it involves "historical singularities carried by matter", but at the biological and psychosocial levels too, there is always a "historicity [*historicité*]" that accounts for each of their specific individuations. In this sense, as Andrea Bardin (2009: 189-215) recognises, there is for Simondon "a historicity of physical, chemical and biological individuations, just as there is an historicity of the different individuations of the [psychosocial] subject."

[228] Simondon, 2013: 84.

as a dimension of history is not recognised as determinant in specifying the differenciating roles that are played by the differenciator of difference within a system. Indeed, following these points, we can even argue that it is only by taking up this constitutive historical aspect that Deleuze's ontological account of repetition will find its success and completion.[229]

What consequences follow from this discussion for Deleuze's ethical recommendation that to affirm the temporality of eternal return we must create ourselves as intensive individuals? In effect, the preceding enables us to see that if Deleuze's differenciator plays the determinant role that he attributes to it, this is only because it always finds itself constitutively involved with an order of actuality. There is a whole history that explains not only the emergence of each diverse differenciator, but which also determines the determinant function that each of those individual agents will play within a given structural system.[230] Now, if we are referring to the differenciator that we must seek to create ourselves as human beings in order to affirm the temporality of eternal return, what we must recognise, *pace* Deleuze, is that this differenciator is never simply *indeterminate* from the point of view of history and actuality. Indeed, the ethical effort by which we establish ourselves as a differenciator for the structures that linger around us (as the virtual side of our existence) is *itself* always precisely defined and determined in relation to a whole complex of social and historical factors. As Guattari might have written, there is no differenciating site that is purely "freed" or purified from the empirical contents and mediations of history, as evidenced by the fact that *even* Deleuze's differenciator, *even* when it is supposed to be operating at its most differential level (that is, by creating specific individuations), cannot help but evoke such mediations.[231] Hence, it makes little sense to claim that we can make ourselves intensive individuals only by directing our ethical attention *away* from the explication that our existence as human beings inevitably carries. On the contrary, if a

[229] My argument here links up with Jay Lampert's (2006: 54) that the success of Deleuze's ontological account of the future "requires more emphasis on actual historical events than *DR* calls into play."
[230] As Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 96) will say in *What is Philosophy?*: "Without history becoming would remain, indeterminate and unconditioned, [even if] becoming is not history." I will return to this claim in the next chapter.
[231] cf. MS 322; DR 88.

differenciator's activity is always in part made possible by its constitutive involvement with a historical order, and if that order also contains within it *anti-productive* elements and tendencies, as Guattari argues, then we can make ourselves sites for the affirmation of the new only by *strategically* directing our ethical activity to our given orders of actuality.[232] Only by developing a strategic relation to historical factors can we ensure that our determinant ethical activity does not tend towards the identitarian repetition of those repressive elements that also compose our actual existence—that ethical activity does not bear "the imprint of identity and resemblance" in relation to those anti-productive elements.[233] Only in that way, to once again invoke Guattari, can we ensure that our ethical potential is fortified against any attempt to hinder it.[234] Only by strategically relating our ethical activity to a domain of actuality can we have the chance to establish ourselves as the untimely caesura that disrupts the identitarian or ideological continuity of the present with itself.

Yet, as we have seen, this is precisely *not* how Deleuze configures his temporal ethics in *Difference and Repetition*. Indeed, in a certain sense, Deleuze's argument even runs counter to this ethos, insofar as the second rule of his ethics of intensive quantities demands precisely that we do not explicate ourselves (too much) with the order of explication or actuality. Now, of course, one can reply here that Deleuze's bracketed emphasis on the '*too much*' indicates something altogether different to the argument I have developed thus far. It might be stated, that is, that Deleuze does attribute a value to particular forms of actuality, that he prudentially recognises that we cannot remove ourselves from the actual so much that we destroy ourselves.[235] However, while it cannot be denied that there is something significant about Deleuze's prudentialism here—something that already points to the ethics of *A Thousand Plateaus*, as Leonard Lawlor has recently stated—it is also important to recall, as I noted above, that this prudentialism seeks only to avoid the *death* of ethical subjects.[236]

[232] As Lampert (2006: 69) frames this point: "[r]evolutionary politics has to be part of a theory [or ethics] of time." cf. Boundas, 2006: 412.
[233] MS 325.
[234] MS 329.
[235] cf. Lawlor, 2019: 451-452.
[236] Ibid. 451-452.

Deleuze is not here claiming that we seek to relate ourselves to the order of explication because the productive operation of a differenciator depends—as a *positive* condition—on its constitutive involvement with the historical.[237] What Deleuze's emphasis on the 'too much' continues to neglect is the fact that the success of a temporal ethics always depends on the *strategic* relations it entertains with its surrounding conditions of actuality. And it is here, at this precise point, that Deleuze's temporal ethics rejoins Bergson's even as it most markedly departs from it. We have seen that almost nothing in Deleuze's proposed ethics of intensive quantities can be classified as intuitive. And yet, like Bergson, Deleuze fails to recognise that the success of a temporal ethics in bringing about the order of the new always depends on a greater constitutive involvement with the historical than he is explicitly willing to admit.

5.4. Conclusion: embracing the machine

I have argued in this chapter that despite departing in significant respects from Bergson's intuitive ethics, Deleuze's temporal ethics in *Difference and Repetition* remains caught up in the problem of history. Although Deleuze deploys the notions of eternal return, the differenciator of difference, and intensity as a way of avoiding the implication with the actual that he sees as a major stumbling block for the second, Bergsonian synthesis of time, his own temporal ethics cannot ultimately escape that involvement. Indeed, although Deleuze explicitly positions those three 'untimely' notions in opposition to the more 'timely' orders of the present and the historical, as I have argued with Guattari's help, those three notions remain more closely implicated with the historical than the early Deleuze is willing to admit.

I have also suggested that Deleuze could have avoided some of the anti-productive dangers that follow from that constitutive implication by insisting that a successful temporal ethics must relate itself more actively to those historical dimensions that make up our existence. Like Guattari, Deleuze could perhaps have insisted that an ethical affirmation of the absolutely new requires that we give more strategic attention to the socio-historical

[237] The next chapter will say more on retaining actuality as a *positive* condition of ethics.

machineries that surround and constitute us *qua* human subjects. This stress on a strategic attention to the historical might have enabled Deleuze to present a convincing response to the problem of history that manifests itself in his text: anti-production. Ultimately, however, Deleuze does not quite achieve this position in *Difference and Repetition*, and in that sense, his text remains incapable of delivering the successful solution to the problem of history that I have thus far sought in this thesis.

As we know, however, Deleuze does inevitably begin to turn more attention to socio-historical machineries. Indeed, although Deleuze initially expresses some doubts over Guattari's classification of machines as historical, it is precisely a focus on historical machines that occupies the two authors in their joint project on *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.[238] This fact is most prominently (though not exclusively, as the next chapter will show) evinced by the fact that Deleuze and Guattari's first major co-authored text, *Anti-Oedipus*, devotes much of its attention to a detailed strategic and historical study of the social machineries that have come to constitute present-day capitalism.[239]

The question in the final chapter of this thesis is whether, from the perspective of *A Thousand Plateaus*, this strategic attention to the historical enables Deleuze and Guattari to develop a model of temporal ethics that is capable of offering a successful resolution to the problem of history. The alternative is that, like Bergson in *The Two Sources*, Deleuze and Guattari insist on the importance of historical machines only secondarily, that is, only in the context of an immediate 'experience' of time that does not find itself constitutively implicated with the actuality of stratified states of affairs. To an exploration of these issues I now turn.

[238] This reservation is expressed by Deleuze (2015b: 31-35) in a letter to Guattari dated 29/07/1969, where Deleuze positively responds to Guattari's text, whilst also asking for further clarification over its positioning of machines as historical ("there I do not know, I do not see that myself, but I am sure that you will convince me—need more specific examples") and its concept of anti-production.
[239] AO 139-272. For an excellent account of the universal history provided by *Anti-Oedipus*, see: Colebrook, 2009: 1-32.

6. Deleuze II: the machinic temporal ethics of *A Thousand Plateaus*

Following my discussion of *Difference and Repetition*, in this final chapter I want to explore the conception of ethical activity that emerges in Deleuze and Guattari's co-authored work. Particularly, I want to focus on the model of temporal ethics that arises in *A Thousand Plateaus* to consider how far it might provide a resolution to the problem of history that still besets Deleuze's earlier work. As is well known, *A Thousand Plateaus* is not the only Deleuze and Guattari text that deals with ethical concerns. As Foucault famously notes, their first co-authored work, *Anti-Oedipus*, is itself a profoundly ethical text.[1] But though *Anti-Oedipus* certainly begins to formulate many of the concepts that would become central to Deleuze and Guattari's joint ethical project, its focus also remains relatively limited. As Deleuze explains in a subsequent interview, that text's primary target is the "familial or theatrical model of the unconscious" that had until its publication pervaded structuralist psychoanalysis.[2] The ethical concepts of *Anti-Oedipus* are therefore specifically designed to challenge that particular paradigm.[3] *A Thousand Plateaus*, by contrast, has a more expansive and creative field of application.[4] With its highly temporalised concepts of becoming, the refrain, rhizome, the plane of consistency, and the body without organs (BwO), that text also moves Deleuze and Guattari's work somewhat closer than *Anti-Oedipus* to the temporal concerns that guided Deleuze's earlier philosophy.[5] For these reasons, then, I here devote my attention to the temporal ethics of *A Thousand Plateaus*.

A Thousand Plateaus significantly broadens the philosophical scope of *Difference and Repetition*. Although Deleuze and Guattari remain interested in the question of how we might ethically relate ourselves to a plane of becoming (or *consistency*, as they call it), this

[1] Foucault, 1983: xiii.
[2] Deleuze, 2006a: 175.
[3] The concept of desiring-machines illustrates this well. Despite playing a key role in *Anti-Oedipus*, the concept is later dropped by the authors, partly, as Dosse (2012: 135) argues, "because the concept had done its job of undermining the concept of structure, which no longer needed to be challenged in 1980, when the structuralist paradigm was little more than a memory."
[4] Deleuze, 2006a: 175-176.
[5] This difference should not be overstated, since many of the concepts that receive a temporal exposition in *A Thousand Plateaus* also do so in *Anti-Oedipus*. The concept of the BwO, which is defined in both texts as an intensive *spatium*, is a good example. cf. AO 60, 84-85, 309, 319.

interest is no longer exclusively articulated through a generalised ontology of repetition. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari think this ethical project in connection with a complex range of socio-historical factors, such as the constitution and functioning of diverse assemblages, regimes, and machines. In a decisive alteration, as I begin to show in section one by turning my attention to the "Geology of Morals" plateau, Deleuze and Guattari now think the project of temporal ethics in close connection with a process of stratification whereby a diversity of stratified formations (or "strata") become historically constituted.[6] In line with Guattari's emphasis in "Machine and Structure", Deleuze and Guattari now also frame their conception of temporal ethics in terms of the connections and disjunctions that can be forged between a diversity of specific *machinic* factors. Specifically, they argue that we can connect ourselves with a plane of temporal novelty only by fostering a very particular "little machine", which they call the body without organs (BwO).[7]

In this chapter, I want to consider whether these conceptual alterations allow Deleuze and Guattari to avoid the problem of history that persisted in Deleuze's solo ethics. My argument is that they do. Indeed, as I will show in section two, despite continuing to frame the BwO in terms of Deleuze's earlier conception of intensity, the authors now come to recognise the constitutive importance of historical factors for the creation of that particular ethical machine. Specifically, they argue that in order to connect ourselves to the novel temporality of the plane of consistency by means of the BwO, we must *directly* and *prudently* relate ourselves to those stratified formations (or strata) that have historically constituted us as subjects. And in so doing, I contend in section three, Deleuze and Guattari not only cease to oppose temporal becoming to history. Ultimately, by recognising the constitutive importance of history for ethical praxis, Deleuze and Guattari are also develop a model of temporal ethics that is capable of strategically negotiating what I have throughout this thesis

[6] In my view, this plateau is crucial for understanding Deleuze and Guattari's ethics in *A Thousand Plateaus*, since it not only pluralises the account of individuation provided by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, but, in so doing, also provides us with vital clues as to how the temporality of the plane of consistency is to be affirmed in practice.

[7] ATP 161. The BwO also makes an appearance, in slightly modified form, in: AO 9-16, passim; LS 82-93, 188-193, 198-203.

called the problem of history. In this sense, I suggest by way of conclusion, the authors are able to fulfil the promise that is first heralded by Bergson in *The Two Sources*: that of resolving the problem of history by connecting the task of temporal ethics to the operation of historically situated machines.

6.1. Assemblages, strata and the plane of consistency

In many ways, *A Thousand Plateaus* continues to be informed by the schizoanalytic aims of *Anti-Oedipus*. Like its companion volume, *A Thousand Plateaus* continues to think ethics as an enterprise that must necessarily proceed in relation to a plurality of "machinic connections, disjunctions and conjunctions."[8] But whereas *Anti-Oedipus* sets itself the task of articulating this schizoanalytic praxis in direct opposition to the structuralism and familialism of psychoanalysis, *A Thousand Plateaus* critically targets a much wider dogmatic image of thought.[9] As the text's introduction explains, psychoanalysis is only one particular "example" of a much larger historical tendency within Western thought to engage with the world on the basis of "arborescence".[10] In this "sad image of thought" that has traditionally dominated philosophy, things are only ever grasped in terms of axioms, hierarchies and laws of resemblance.[11] But all such modalities accomplish, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, is prevent a "rhizomatic" understanding of the world, one where only the principles of heterogeneity, multiplicity and rupture reign.[12] More crucially, since "it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces", arborescence also fails to give the radical potential of desire its due; arborescence "blocks" and "obstructs" desire.[13] And for the authors, philosophy can begin to overcome these blockages only by engaging in a proliferation of new rhizomatic concepts that not only revise arborescent ways of thinking, but which also

[8] Adkins, 2015: 9.
[9] For more on Deleuze's changing conception of the image of thought, see: Lampert, 2012. For Deleuze's own account of the transition between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, see: Deleuze, 2006a: 175-180.
[10] ATP 17-18.
[11] ATP 16.
[12] ATP 7-11.
[13] ATP 14.

provide us with the ethical means to "live" and connect ourselves with those temporal "lines" that escape the dogmatic closures of arborescence.[14]

Few concepts are more central to this ethical rhizomatic enterprise than that of the assemblage (*agencement*).[15] As Deleuze and Guattari define them, assemblages are nothing more than combinations of heterogeneous material and enunciative elements: "In assemblages you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodges; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs."[16] These combinations, moreover, are always both "machinic" and "concrete": they not only operate by making and breaking intensive connections (this makes them machinic), but they also make and break these connections in close relation to a socio-historical field of desire (this makes them concrete).[17] One of the examples that Deleuze and Guattari provide for the assemblage is the Dogon anvil.[18] This example is key because, for the Dogons, the smith's anvil is not simply an object for the creation of weapons and tools; the anvil is also a site of *social* significance insofar as by striking it, Dogon smiths also find themselves related to a range of historical myths that continually orient and organise the life of their community.[19] As an assemblage, the Dogon anvil is thus not simply the site for the connection and breakage between material bodies (e.g. metallic elements and human bodies) and enunciations (e.g. 'the first smith' and 'the living'). From the start, that assemblage is also *a* concrete social arrangement that reifies certain preestablished ways of organising the relations between bodies and statements.[20] In Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, this means that assemblages are first of all "territorial".[21] Assemblages always

[14] "There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree or root. There are only lines." ATP 8, 14.
[15] Deleuze elsewhere reveals that "the idea of an assemblage (which replaces the idea of desiring machines)" provides the unity of *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze, 2006a: 177.
[16] Deleuze, 2006a: 177.
[17] ATP 71; AO 342.
[18] ATP 71.
[19] On these points, cf. Griaule, 1970: 84-88.
[20] An assemblage is not a structural formation: "An assemblage has neither base nor superstructure, neither deep structure nor superficial structure." ATP 90.
[21] "The territory is the first assemblage, the first thing to constitute an assemblage; the assemblage is fundamentally territorial." ATP 323.

institute a territory that operates as a well-defined and relatively stable way of organising and distributing the bodies and enunciations that are brought together in it. Nevertheless, as with all other social arrangements or territories, assemblages are also defined by their points of escape—or by what Deleuze and Guattari term their "lines of flight".[22] Thus, even if assemblages tend towards the reification of particular forms of social organisation, in continually forging connections and breakages between bodies and enunciations, they also 'emit' errant machinic elements that are capable of being 'unified' or 'organised' in a variety of different ways.

Broadly speaking, there are two main ways in which the errant elements in an assemblage can become 'organised', which also correspond to what Deleuze and Guattari call the assemblage's two sides.[23] On the one hand, a process of "stratification" can gather the machinic elements of assemblages into "strata": just as sediments become sedimentary rocks, for example, those elements can become organised into "layers" that not only assume a relative rigidity, but which also begin to interact with their surroundings as formed aggregates.[24] When machinic elements become stratified in this way, they undergo a process of "territorialisation" or "reterritorialisation".[25] By becoming stratified, those elements' previous mobility becomes "captured" or "recaptured" in a relatively stable form (or territory) to which the elements henceforth remain attached, as if locked into a geological system of resonance.[26] On the other hand, machinic elements can become related on what Deleuze and Guattari call a destratified "plane of consistency or body without organs".[27] This plane or "body without organs is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flows in all directions,

[22] "[T]here is no social system that does not leak from all directions, even if it makes its segments increasingly rigid in order to seal the lines of flight." ATP 204, 216.
[23] "One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless makes it a kind of organism (…); it also has a side facing a *body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism". ATP 4, 40, 145.
[24] This example is pertinent only to the "geological" strata. Other strata have their own unique processes of stratification. ATP 40-41.
[25] "[Strata] operate by coding and territorialisation". ATP 40.
[26] ATP 40.
[27] ATP 56.

by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles."[28] On this plane, the elements of assemblages are no longer caught up in systems of resonance such as those of formed unities and aggregates. Instead, those elements not only retain their fundamental mobility vis-à-vis such aggregates, but they also begin to communicate and connect with one another on the basis of correspondingly mobile "waves or flows of deterritorialisation".[29] Unlike the strata that constitute the assemblage's alternate side, the plane of consistency is thus defined less by its territorialised form than by the deterritorialising function that it plays in creating connections, conjunctions and flows between errant machinic elements.[30]

Another way of formulating this distinction between the strata and the plane of consistency is *temporally*. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari note, it is "not the same time, the same temporality" that operates in each of these two sides of the assemblage.[31] Deleuze and Guattari clarify this point by appealing to the notions of Aion and Chronos that are most extensively developed by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*.[32] Following that text's description of Aion as the temporal "locus" where only disjunctions and events that are irreducible to static qualities and extensions communicate across their differences, the authors write that the plane of consistency expresses "the indefinite time of the event, the floating line that knows only speeds and continually divides that which transpires into an already-there that is at the same time not-yet-here, a simultaneous too-late and too-early, a something that is

[28] ATP 40.
[29] ATP 53.
[30] ATP 141.
[31] ATP 262.
[32] Deleuze and Guattari do not explicitly clarify why they articulate the temporality of the plane of consistency in terms of Aion instead of eternal return. Perhaps Aion—as a time that not only "traces the frontier between bodies and language" but also "articulates the one and the other as two series capable of being developed" (LS 167)—is better suited to the notion of assemblages as complexes of bodies and enunciations. Perhaps Aion, as a time that subdivides the present in "both directions at once" (LS 164) also more closely coheres with the various 'becomings-X' that Deleuze and Guattari emphasise in the becoming plateau. All that said, the difference between Aion and eternal return should not be overstated, since for the early Deleuze both times can be classified as "the always displaced paradoxical instance" where the communication between disparate series is established (cf. LS 175-176). Moreover, both the eternal return and Aion are formulated as expressing the being of becoming: "Returning is being, but only the being of becoming." (DR 41). cf. LS 162-168.

both going to happen and has just happened."[33] This reference to Aion indicates that the plane of consistency is composed only of temporal relations that exceed those that pertain between pre-formed unities, aggregates or subjects. In the plane of consistency, "[t]here are only relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are *relatively* unformed, molecules and particles of all kinds."[34] For this reason, the plane of consistency (or becoming) is "Untimely": it "expresses the floating, nonpulsed time proper to Aion, in other words, the time of pure event or of becoming, which articulates relative speeds and slowness independently of the chronometric or chronological values that time assumes in [its] other modes."[35] By contrast, the strata express the time of "*Chronos*: the time of measure that situates things and persons, develops a form, and determines a subject."[36] This means that on the strata, the connection and communication between machinic elements is relatively limited from the perspective of time. Indeed, rather than communicating on a temporal locus that is not limited by the qualities and extensions of pre-made forms and aggregates, on the strata, errant machinic elements communicate only *through* those forms and aggregates; their relation and movement is thus limited by "the spatiotemporal and even existential coordinates" that those forms and aggregates embody.[37]

These two temporalities are, as it were, the two fates corresponding to the two sides of the assemblage into which errant machinic elements can fall. But what determines whether an assemblage's errant elements will become entities in the strata or, alternatively, flows of becoming in the plane of consistency? What determines whether those elements will begin to express the temporality of Chronos, or, by contrast, the untimely temporality of becoming? Simply put, Deleuze and Guattari's answer to this question is: "abstract machines".[38]

[33] LS 165; ATP 262.
[34] ATP 266 (emphasis added). This qualification of elements on the plane of consistency as *relatively* unformed is important, as we will see shortly.
[35] ATP 263.
[36] ATP 262. "Nietzsche opposes history not to the eternal but to the subhistorical or superhistorical: the Untimely, which is another name for haecceity, becoming, the innocence of becoming." ATP 296.
[37] ATP 55.
[38] Or, as Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 87) elsewhere write: "it's the abstract machines that measure

Abstract machines not only extract errant elements from assemblages, but also decide whether those elements will once again become related to a territory or, indeed, whether they will "produce an opening onto [*une overture sur*]" the fully destratified plane of Aion.[39] These "[m]achines are always singular keys that open [*ouvrent*] or close [*referment*] an assemblage".[40] To grasp how errant machinic elements are articulated as either strata (Chronos) or destratified flows (Aion), we must therefore define these types of machines. The first point to make is that these machines are, like assemblages, machinic; they too operate by breaking and making connections. Unlike assemblages, however, abstract machines do not in the first instance constitute a territory. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, "[c]ontrary to the strata, and the assemblages considered under their other aspects, abstract machines know nothing of forms and substances. This is what makes them abstract".[41] Rather than consisting of elements that have a preestablished form or significance, those machines are abstract in that they consist exclusively of "unformed matters exhibiting only degrees of intensity."[42] Thus, though abstract machines always work in close connection with concrete machinic assemblages, the two remain distinct.[43] The abstract machine is not a more general or universal version of a concrete machinic assemblage.[44] Instead, the abstract machine is a *function* that inserts or plugs itself into a machinic assemblage to draw from it errant machinic matters: "a machine is like a set of cutting edges that insert themselves into the assemblage undergoing deterritorialisation, and draw variations and mutations of it."[45]

Given that abstract machines only handle deterritorialised or unformed machinic matters, one of the key questions that emerge from Deleuze and Guattari's introduction of this concept is how those machines are capable of turning those matters into strata (or Chronos).

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the mode of existence and reality of the assemblages in terms of the capacity that they demonstrate for undoing their own segments".

[39] ATP 333.
[40] ATP 334.
[41] ATP 510-511.
[42] ATP 511.
[43] ATP 71.
[44] ATP 93, 100.
[45] ATP 141, 333, 511.

"The question", as the authors frame it, "is not how something manages to leave the strata but how things get into them in the first place."[46] In answering this question, Deleuze and Guattari also start to elaborate many notions that will become crucial for their ethical project of creating a praxis that resonates with the temporality of the plane of consistency.[47] It is therefore important that we dwell on this response before turning to that ethics in more detail in the next section. Now, as noted, stratification is the process by which unformed matters become strata. By itself, however, the idea of stratification does little to explain the *diversity* between stratified formations. Yet, this diversity is real. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari, directly borrowing from Simondon, maintain, there are at least three types of "major strata: physicochemical, organic, and anthropomorphic (or 'alloplastic')."[48] But though they are all strata, these types of formation are clearly not the same, for they encompass entities as varied as rocks, animals and language. If we are to avoid generalising the real diversity between these aggregates, it is thus clear that the concept of stratification must be further developed to account for the genesis of this diversity.[49] This is especially important given that Deleuze and Guattari also are also keen to emphasise that the matter composing different strata is invariably the same: "matter is the same on all the strata."[50] But if this is true, what, then, accounts for both the formation of strata and the diversity of stratified formations?

Deleuze and Guattari find their solution to this two-pronged question by combining key elements of Louis Hjelmslev's linguistics with a notion of "double articulation".[51] Specifically, the authors take from Hjelmslev the idea that though matter is everywhere "one and the

[46] ATP 56.
[47] As Eugene Holland (2013: 56) argues, there is something inherently ethical about in Deleuze and Guattari's account of stratification, insofar as it attempts "to construe the world in such a way as to make it maximally susceptible to change, with the value of the concepts created being determined pragmatically by the degree to which they enable us to produce desirable change though 'real-life' operations in the real world". The indication that this account is fundamentally related to time is provided in the last lines of the stratification plateau, where we see Challenger (the plateau's main character) hurrying towards the "cosmic rhythm" of the plane of consistency by means of a "particle Clock". ATP 73-74, cf. 310-350.
[48] ATP 502.
[49] Adkins, 2015: 46-47.
[50] ATP 45.
[51] The latter notion is derived from André Martinet, as Ronald Bogue observes. Bogue, 2018: 48-50.

same", it is not only given a different "content" and "expression" depending on what kind of emphases are placed on it, but each of those two articulations is itself also subject to the further distinction of "form" and "substance".[52] According to this schema, amorphous matter is not simply articulated by abstract machines into the traditional "form-content duality": there is a form of content and a form of expression no less than a substance of content and a substance of expression.[53] Now, we can clarify what each of these terms means by once again recalling the example of sedimentary rock formation. As the Deleuze and Guattari understand it, a sedimentary rock is always formed by a process of double articulation, which itself has two main moments—the first referring to sedimentation and the second to cementation.[54] In a first articulation (that of content), sediments (which provide the *substance* of sedimentation) are selected from a flow, such as for example water or wind, and they are then statistically ordered into layers (with this ordering becoming the *form* of content). In a second articulation (that of expression), those ordered sediments not only begin to calcify (form), but they are also arranged by this calcification into a solid object with relatively stable properties (substance). Or, as the authors, extrapolating from this example, write: "The first articulation chooses or deducts, from unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units (*substances*) upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions (*forms*). The second articulation establishes functional, compact, stable structures (*forms*), and constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualised (*substances*)."[55] From this basic description of double articulation we can glean a number of important insights. First, by substances, Deleuze and Guattari refer primarily to formed matters that are organised or "coded" by forms.[56] Alternatively, we might call forms the functional entities that "fix" substances.[57]

[52] Hjelmslev, 1961: 52-58. Hjelmslev develops these categories in opposition to the structural linguistics of Saussure. Thus, when he speaks of matter (or what he calls "thought-mass") and its differentiation, he has exclusively *linguistic* elements and processes in mind. Crucially, Deleuze and Guattari expand this schema, arguing that matter "is not linguistic in scope or origin." ATP 43.
[53] ATP 43.
[54] For a critique of Deleuze and Guattari's use of geological terminology, see: DeLanda, 1997: 290.
[55] ATP 40-41.
[56] ATP 41
[57] Bogue, 2018: 49.

Secondly, from the viewpoint of substances, the distinction between content and expression is *relative*, since the substance of an expression can always act as the substance for another *content*.[58] This is clearly exemplified in the case of the sediments. From the perspective of sedimentary rocks, these sediments are indeed the substances of content; yet, from the perspective of the form of content that orders them, for example, they are *metastable units*, which entails that on another level they *too* are substances of *an* expression. This relativity entails that the double articulation of strata always presupposes a certain *history*: "Form of content and form of expression (…): each has its own history, microhistory, segments."[59] Finally, we must acknowledge that on the basis of this "general relativism", there can be no absolute or ideal separation between the two articulations.[60] One articulation always reciprocally presupposes the other, such that "it cannot be said that the terms pre-exist their double articulation. It is the double articulation that distributes them according to the line it draws in each stratum."[61]

This notion of double articulation effectively pluralises the account of individuation that Deleuze provides in *Difference and Repetition*.[62] With this notion, the real diversity between actualised states can now be explained as the way different abstract machines perform the process of double articulation on their respective "external milieus".[63] As noted above, abstract machines never work in complete isolation: their operation always presupposes the presence of an 'exterior' assemblage (dealing with formed matters) that they plug themselves into.[64] Using the language of double articulation, we might say that an abstract machine 'chooses' what formed matters it will extract from an assemblage as its *substances*,

[58] ATP 44.
[59] ATP 67, cf. 51.
[60] ATP 44-45.
[61] ATP 44.
[62] This also suggests that the intensive abstract machine plays a similar ontological function to the Deleuze's earlier intensive differenciator of difference, even if this functioning is no longer understood in structural terms: "an abstract machine is neither an infrastructure that is determining in the last instance nor a transcendental Idea that is determining in the supreme instance." ATP 142.
[63] ATP 49.
[64] Although Deleuze and Guattari do not explicitly describe assemblages as the 'exterior milieu' of abstract machines, this is implied in their definition of such milieus as "already stratified" or "organised". ATP 49.

just as it 'decides' what *forms* it will impose on those substances.[65] And on this account, there is diversity between strata because abstract machines are able to form and select substances in a range of different ways. In the geological stratum, for example, substances are selected by what Deleuze and Guattari call a process of "induction".[66] This means that substances are always selected on the outer surface of the territory that is simultaneously being formed by the double articulation. "A crystal", Deleuze and Guattari write (citing Simondon), "displays this process in its pure state, since its form expands in all directions, but always as a function of the surface layer of the substance, which can be emptied of its interior without interfering with the growth."[67] Conversely, in other strata, this selection and formation happens via other means. In the organic or biological stratum, substances are selected and formed not only by processes of induction (i.e. biological growth), but also via processes of "transduction".[68] Another way of stating this difference is to recall that biological systems do not simply expand at their edges: populations of animals, for example, also grow by exchanging genetic material through reproductive processes.[69] The double articulation of biological strata is thus not subject to the same *territorial* constraints that govern the articulation of physical strata. Because the organic abstract machine operates via transduction, biological strata can expand not only at the outer edge of their territory, but also *internally* in relation to a range of other types of biological substances and forms.[70] Lastly, the abstract machine of the linguistic or anthropomorphic stratum operates by *translation*. But here, Deleuze and Guattari warn, "[t]ranslation should not be understood simply as the ability of language to 'represent' in some way the givens of another language, but beyond that as the ability of language (…) to represent all the other strata."[71] Otherwise

[65] While this formulation seems to directly contradict the aforementioned claim that "abstract machines know nothing of form and substances", this is not the case: "The abstract machine *in itself* is destratified, deterritorialised; it has no form of its own (much less substance) and makes no distinction *within itself* between content and expression, even though *outside itself* it presides over that distinction and distributes it in strata, domains, and territories." ATP 141 (emphasis added).
[66] ATP 60.
[67] ATP 60.
[68] ATP 60, 62.
[69] ATP 59.
[70] ATP 60.
[71] ATP 62.

said, the alloplastic stratum's distinctive feature consists of its ability to take the matters of *other* strata as its own substances and subject them to the forms or "overcoding specific to language."[72] Hence, unlike the machines operating on the biological or physical strata, which can select and form matters only from their own territories or strata, the abstract machine constituting the alloplastic stratum is able to reorganise *other* territories or "other strata in its own terms."[73] And this fact accounts for that stratum's distinctive type of double articulation.

We need not familiarise ourselves with the entire complexity of this account of stratification to gather from it a number of points that will become crucial for Deleuze and Guattari's temporal ethics. Firstly, while the authors certainly insist that different abstract machines organise strata in a diverse range of ways, they also remind us that there is no "cosmic or spiritual evolution from [strata] to the other" in terms of their *degree* of organisation.[74] The alloplastic stratum is no more organised than the biological or physical strata, or indeed, any of the other substrata from which it extracts its substances. All strata are organised to an *equal* degree by abstract machines ("everywhere the same Mechanosphere"), but different abstract machines perform that organisation in divergent ways.[75] Nevertheless, as even our brief sketch of the three major types of double articulation makes clear, due to the way their respective abstract machines operate, each stratum presents its own distinctive opportunities for movements of *deterritorialisation*.[76] To grasp this point, we need only recall that the physical and organic strata, for example, do not relate to their external milieu in the same way: while the latter reterritorialises its milieu only at its edges, the former is also capable of reterritorialising milieus on its interior.[77] In accordance with Deleuze and Guattari's famous dictum that movements of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation always imply one another, this means that the organism possesses a

[72] ATP 62.
[73] Adkins, 2015: 58.
[74] ATP 69.
[75] ATP 69.
[76] ATP 65, 72.
[77] ATP 60.

greater "power to deterritorialise or accelerate deterritorialisation" than any physical entity.[78] Simply put, the organism is capable of greater variation than the crystal because it is capable of undergoing change in 'more' of its territory—even if both entities are equally stratified or organised. And this power for deterritorialisation is even greater on the alloplastic stratum.[79] Hence, rather than simply emphasising that territories are exclusively places of capture or closure, Deleuze and Guattari's account of double articulation in fact allows us to recognise that any territory, insofar as it is constituted by an abstract machine, always affords distinctive opportunities for movements of deterritorialisation and openness.[80] "The territory itself is a place of passage."[81] And in this context, the central task of Deleuze and Guattari's temporal ethics, as the next section will show, involves precisely fostering a very particular type of abstract machine—a body without organs, or BwO—that is capable of 'extracting' the radical, Aionic temporality of the plane of consistency from a given territorial milieu.

Before we proceed to outline and assess this ethics, however, we must heed a couple of Deleuze and Guattari's warnings on the subject of deterritorialisation. First, we must bear in mind that not all movements of deterritorialisation are the same.[82] As Deleuze and Guattari put it, there are both "relative" and "absolute" movements of deterritorialisation.[83] And what qualifies a given movement of deterritorialisation as either relative or absolute is not so much its velocity as "whether it constitutes epistrata or parastrata and proceeds by articulated segments or, on the contrary, jumps from one singularity to another following a nondecomposable nonsegmentary line drawing a metastratum on the plane of consistency."[84] Otherwise said, a movement of deterritorialisation remains relative if it

[78] ATP 10, 54, 59.
[79] ATP 62.
[80] "We have said enough bad things about the territory that we can now evaluate all the creations that tend toward it, occur within it, and result or will result from it." ATP 322.
[81] ATP 326.
[82] Strictly speaking, there are three main types of deterritorialisation for Deleuze and Guattari: relative, negative absolute and positive absolute deterritorialisations. ATP 134.
[83] ATP 55-56.
[84] ATP 56.

continues to constitute strata.[85] Alternatively, that movement can become absolute if it begins to work in favour of—or *on*—the plane of consistency itself. It becomes absolute by beginning to express the speed and *temporality* of the plane of consistency, a temporality of becoming where "there is no longer a milieu movement or rhythm, nor a territorialised or territorialising movement or rhythm."[86] In this sense, the deterritorialisations that occur on the three major strata referred to above are all relative and "should most assuredly not be confused with the possibility of absolute deterritorialisation, an absolute line of flight, absolute drift."[87] Absolute deterritorialisation expresses a time "that exceeds the capacities of any possible assemblage", a temporality of becoming that is no longer tied to things and persons, substances and forms, and contents and expression.[88] It expresses a temporality that is "yet to come [*à venir*], a new type of reality."[89] But this new temporal reality, Deleuze and Guattari insist, "can be obtained on the plane of consistency only by means of an abstract machine capable of covering [*couvrir*] and even creating it [*de le tracer*]".[90] It can be achieved only by means of the BwO.

Are we to conclude from this that movements of absolute deterritorialisation can be created only in complete *isolation* from the major strata with which we have so far dealt? Not at all, for as Deleuze and Guattari once again explicitly warn, there is never any clear-cut opposition between the strata and the plane of consistency.[91] Indeed, these two planes—which are, as we noted above, the two sides of assemblages and, we might now add, the two "modes of existence" of abstract machines—are always in a continuous relation of mutual interaction, implication and dependency.[92] From the viewpoint of strata, this means that no stratum is ever completely closed in on itself. Strata do not simply present

[85] Crystallisation exemplifies this relative movement well: though the crystal deterritorialises its former shape as it expands, that movement remains relative because it simply creates another layer of territory or strata.
[86] ATP 326.
[87] ATP 55.
[88] ATP 262, 326.
[89] ATP 142.
[90] ATP 166.
[91] ATP 70, 144-145, cf. 265-272.
[92] "*We may even say that the abstract machines that emit and combine particles have two very different modes of existence: the Ecumenon and the Planomenon.*" ATP 56.

opportunities for deterritorialisation. “In a certain sense”, movements of absolute deterritorialisation can even be said to be *primary* to the strata, as the latter “would be nothing without these movements that deposit [upon] them” the substances and forms out of which they are composed.[93] This is not to suggest, however, that in *another*, *certain sense*, the plane of consistency and its movements are never *dependent* on the strata and the relative solidifications that they impose. Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari also strongly emphasise, the plane of consistency is never simply an entirely anarchic aggregate of mobile elements: “The plane of consistency, or planomenon is in no way an undifferentiated aggregate of unformed matters, but neither is it a chaos of formed matters of every kind.”[94] The plane of consistency *itself* operates under certain “rules [*règles*]”.[95] And the crucial point to grasp here is that it is *only insofar as the plane of consistency remains dependent on, and imbued by, the strata* (via the abstract machine that draws it) that it can take up these rules as its own functions. As Deleuze and Guattari put this point, just as deterritorialisation is in a certain sense primary:

> Likewise [*C’est aussi*], the plane of consistency is occupied, drawn by the abstract Machine; the abstract Machine exists *simultaneously* developed [*développée*] on the destratified plane it draws, and enveloped [*enveloppée*] in each stratum whose unity of composition it defines, and even half-erected [*moitié dressée*] in certain strata whose form of prehension it defines. That which traces or dances upon the plane of consistency thus carries [*emporte*] with it an aura of its stratum, an undulation, a memory or tension. The plane of consistency retains [*conserve*] just enough of the strata to extract from them variables that operate in the plane of consistency as its own functions. (….) Continuum of intensities, combined emissions of particles or signs-particles, conjunction of deterritorialised flows: these are the three factors proper [*propres*] to the plane of consistency; they are brought about by the abstract machine and are constitutive [*constituant*] of destratification. Now there is no hint in all of this of a chaotic white night or an undifferentiated black night. There are rules, rules of ‘pla(n)ning’, of diagramming. We will see them later on, or

[93] ATP 55.
[94] ATP 70.
[95] ATP 70.

elsewhere.[96]

The remainder of this chapter will draw out the full ethical consequences of this passage. For now, the important point to note is that for Deleuze and Guattari, the plane of consistency is never simply isolated from the strata that it destratifies with its movements of absolute deterritorialisation. Because the plane of consistency and its movements are always drawn by an abstract machine that remains *simultaneously* connected to concrete or stratified assemblages, that plane always *retains* an aura or trace of that which it destratifies. As the authors helpfully remind us, the abstract machine, "when it constitutes points of creation or potentiality [on the plane of consistency], does not stand outside history [*hors de l'histoire*]".[97] Because abstract machines always stand "erected on particular strata upon which they simultaneously organise a form of expression and a form of content", their operation always bears a dimension of the "here and now [*ici et maintenant*]", that is, of the "actual [*actuelles*]" or stratified states of affairs that they simultaneously constitute.[98] Furthermore, it is only the operation of these *historicised* abstract machines that can bring about the three factors that are *proper* to the plane of consistency: *continuums* of intensities, *combinations* of particle-signs and *conjunctions* of deterritorialised flows. Thus, even if, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, the plane of consistency consists of an Aionic temporality yet-to-come that is not that of substances, forms, contents and expressions, it remains the case that the creation of that temporality must always proceed in close relation to the historical actuality of strata.[99] "We should not forget", the authors advise, "that the plane of consistency is at work and is constructed in the strata, in both cases piece by piece, blow by blow, operation by operation."[100] And as we will see in what follows, it is precisely because Deleuze and Guattari insist on these points that their temporal ethics is capable of providing

[96] ATP 70 (translation of "*C'est aussi*" modified).
[97] ATP 144.
[98] ATP 144. "Abstract, singular, and creative, here and now, real yet nonconcrete, actual yet noneffectuated—that is why abstract machines are named (the Einstein abstract machine (…), etc.)." ATP 511.

This classification of machines as both "actual and contemporary [*actuel et contemporain*]" also emerges in *Anti-Oedipus*: cf. AO 130.
[99] ATP 142.
[100] ATP 337.

a successful resolution to the problem of history that still persists in Deleuze's earlier work.

6.2. Constructing the plane of consistency

So far, I have primarily focused my reading of *A Thousand Plateaus* on Deleuze and Guattari's answer to the question of how abstract machines place things into strata. As noted, this stratification happens via a process of double articulation, which is always performed by an abstract machine that itself remains dependent on prior movements of de/territorialisation. In this section, I want to approach Deleuze and Guattari's answer to the inverse question of "how something manages to leave the strata".[101] As repeatedly indicated, this question is a deeply ethical one for the authors, insofar as by engaging in a process of destratification we not only begin to induce changes in the strata around us, but also begin to directly relate ourselves to the novel temporality of the plane of consistency: Aion. Now, Deleuze and Guattari's answer to this ethical question is not limited to any one place in *A Thousand Plateaus*, but it does perhaps receive its most sustained theoretical elaboration in the plateau entitled "How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?"[102] As Brent Adkins notes, it is in that plateau that Deleuze and Guattari most seriously begin to tackle the question of how a site for becoming and change is to be created in practice.[103] It is therefore to this plateau that I want to turn to as a way of explicating Deleuze and Guattari's model of temporal ethics.

Before I proceed to outline the ethics of creating a BwO, however, I want clarify why Deleuze and Guattari think such an ethics is even necessary. If, as they insist, movements of absolute deterritorialisation are in a sense primary, why do we also have to ethically

[101] ATP 56.
[102] Alongside its appearance in the BwO plateau, the question of destratification also recurs in several other places in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Most notably, it makes an appearance under the four main banners of: (1) "pass-words [*mots de passage*]" in the linguistics plateau; (2) "probe-heads [*têtes chercheuses*]" in the faciality plateau; (3) the 'becomings-X' in the becomings plateau; and (4) "war machine [*machine de guerre*]" in the later plateaus on the State. cf. ATP 110, 189-191, 233-209 passim, 351-473 passim.
[103] Adkins (2015: 98) adds that "[t]hese questions are profoundly ethical for Deleuze and Guattari and in this plateau at least they think them through the body without organs."

attempt to *engender* such movements? Should the primacy of such movements not suggest the *futility* as opposed to the *necessity* of such an ethics? The authors' answer to these questions is simple. We need to ethically engender such movements because "[w]e are continually stratified."[104] That is, even if movements of deterritorialisation are in a sense primary, this does not at all mean that as human beings we necessarily live in line with the plane of consistency and its temporality of becoming. Indeed, the contrary may even be said to be true. Insofar as, *qua* human beings, we presently stand at the intersection between the organic and alloplastic strata, we find ourselves vulnerable to not only the mode of organisation imposed by the "organism", but also the operation of a range of "regimes of signs", all of which impose upon us sets of arborescent or binary relations and modes of subjectivation.[105] A good example of this is our involvement with what Deleuze and Guattari call the abstract machine of "faciality".[106] As they remark, this machine, which is as real and abstract as any of the machines that might operate to create the plane of consistency, works by "recognising" and "inscribing in its overall grid" all those concrete human faces that do not conform to the standard of "your average ordinary White Man".[107] The classic binary mechanism by which this machine operates is aptly summarised as follows: "A ha! It's not a man and it's not a woman, so it must be a transvestite".[108] Now, as noted above, just because this machine is abstract, this does not mean that it is entirely divorced from concrete machinic assemblages. Not only does this machine have a concrete *effect* on those human faces that it selects, grids and recognises. The machine itself is "*effectuated* [*s'effectue*]" in certain concrete social conditions, which is to say that its operation is itself triggered by contingent machinic arrangements or assemblages: "for it is not in operation all

[104] ATP 159.
[105] Unfortunately, I cannot here explore the specific operation of these regimes of signs. For more information on these points, see the fifth plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus* (ATP 111-148), as well as the following helpful commentaries in the literature: Adkins, 2015: 83-95; Holland, 2013: 82-85; Wasser, 2018: 83-98.
[106] Faciality is not a regime of signs, but an abstract machine or "a very special mechanism" that is situated at the concrete intersection between the regimes of subjectification and signifiance. ATP 167-168.
[107] ATP 177-178.
[108] Hence, faciality is one of the abstract conditions of possibility for concrete racist and patriarchal systems of oppression. ATP 177-178.

the time or in just any social formations. (….) There is a whole history behind it."[109] And in short, it is *because* these types of abstract machine both have an effect on, and are effectuated by, concrete machinic assemblages that the temporal ethics called for by Deleuze and Guattari is required. By destratifying the stratifications that we are in actuality, by connecting ourselves to the destratified temporality of the plane of consistency, we effectively alter the contingent stratified conditions under which binary abstract machines like that of faciality find themselves presently *effectuated*, and in so doing, we also begin to modify the *effects* that they have on concrete machinic assemblages.

With these considerations in mind, we can start to see why Deleuze and Guattari choose to articulate their ethics through the concept of the BwO. Simply put, this concept's importance is explained by the pragmatic effect it can have on the specific stratified formations that *currently* bind us as human beings. As Deleuze and Guattari note, there are three main types of strata presently separating us from the temporality of the plane of consistency:

> The principal strata binding human beings are the organism, signifiance and interpretation, and subjectification and subjection. These strata together are what separate us from the plane of consistency and the abstract machine, where there is no longer any regime of signs, where the line of flight effectuates its own potential positivity and deterritorialisation its absolute power.[110]

Each of these stratified formations imposes its own distinctive set of demands upon human beings; but they all find their commonality in capitalism's historical tendency to axiomatise substances with a view to "extract useful labour" from underlying flows of desire.[111] In terms of the organic stratum, this tendency expresses itself as the formation of an 'organism' that organises the organs of a body in a manner that makes them maximally productive and docile.[112] A body that walks on its head and sees through its skin is much less useful for

[109] ATP 180.
[110] ATP 134.
[111] ATP 159.
[112] Following Artaud, *Anti-Oedipus* also classifies the organism as the enemy of the body. AO 9.

capital than an organism that sees through its eyes and walks on its legs.[113] And this is why, as human beings, we are continually organised as an *organism*: "You will be organised, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body—otherwise you're just depraved."[114] Similarly, on the subjective strata, it is much easier to control and manipulate a subject that is consistently itself than one that seeks to continually "dismantle" itself.[115] On the stratum of signifiance, the same contrast applies between a subject willing to interpret itself on the basis of transcendent principles and one refusing any such interpretation.[116] Hence the importance of the other two imperatives by which we are presently constituted as points of *subjectification* and angles of *interpretation*: "You will be a signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted—otherwise you're just a deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement—otherwise you're just a tramp."[117] In this determined context, the ethical contribution brought about by the BwO concerns its ability to precisely disrupt these *three* major mechanisms by which human beings are presently, or actually, stratified.[118] As the authors write, it is never simply a question of dismantling the organism; we must also seek to continually dismantle the "other two strata, signifiance and subjection."[119] It is this function, moreover, that the BwO is able to play by opposing itself not only to the organisation of the organism, but also to the strata of signifiance and subjection.[120]

But if the body without organs is able to play this three-pronged destratifying role, what kind of entity must it in turn *be*? As Deleuze and Guattari define it, the BwO is first and

[113] ATP 150-151.
[114] ATP 159.
[115] ATP 151.
[116] ATP 154-155.
[117] ATP 159.
[118] Commentators often miss that the BwO disrupts the stratifying mechanisms of signifiance and subjection *as well as* those of the organism. John Protevi (2018: 99-114), for example, makes this mistake by positioning the BwO as being "against the organism", whilst giving almost no attention to its interaction with the strata of signifiance and subjection.
[119] ATP 160.
[120] "To the strata as a whole, the BwO opposes disarticulation (...) as the property of the plane of consistency, experimentation as the operation on that plane (no signifier, never interpret!), and nomadism as the movement (keep moving, even in place, never stop moving, motionless voyage, desubjectivation)." ATP 159.

foremost a site or practice of experimentation: "it is an inevitable exercise or experimentation (….). It is not at all a notion or a concept but a practice, a set of practices."[121] Now, the distinctive feature of this experimental practice is its focus on creating *intensive* (as opposed to extensive) connections between machinic elements. To clarify the intensive nature of the BwO, Deleuze and Guattari redeploy some of the terminology of *Difference and Repetition*.[122] Following that text's emphasis on the intensive's relation to embryology, they write that the BwO is a "*spatium* that is itself intensive, lacking extension", which can also be compared to an egg: "The BwO is the egg."[123] In this sense, and contrary to the classical Cartesian definition of bodies as extended, the body to which the BwO refers is irreducible to space and spatiality.[124] Much like an egg 'before' it becomes differenciated into an organism, the BwO should be defined only as a set of intensive vectors, gradients and thresholds.[125] That which operates 'within' it is not the extension of the organism and the organisation of the organs, but only intensities: "Only intensities pass and circulate."[126] Hence, when Deleuze and Guattari recommend the ethical creation of a *body* without organs, they are decidedly not insisting that the important aspect of such experimentation is its physical or extended form. Indeed, although experimentation can certainly take up bodily forms—as the authors' twice repeated reference to the masochist's BwO reveals—the ethically significant changes that are brought by such practices are never extensive in nature.[127] "It is a question of forces."[128] When the masochist, for example, puts a bridle on themself in order to be ridden like a horse by a master or mistress, the ethically relevant aspect of this practice is not the extended presence of the bridle vis-à-vis its surrounding bodies, but rather "the circuit of intensities" that this assemblage causes to pass between an animal and human

[121] ATP 149-150.
[122] DR 222-244.
[123] ATP 153, 164.
[124] "It is not space, nor is it in space". ATP 153.
[125] ATP 153.
[126] ATP 153.
[127] Deleuze and Guattari's famous emphasis on "stationary journeys" must be understood from this perspective. cf. ATP 151, 381.
[128] ATP 155.

series (the horse and the masochist).[129]

According to Deleuze and Guattari, this example also shows that the BwO, like Deleuze's intensive differenciator, is not equivalent to the systems of the I (*Je*) or the Self (*Moi*).[130] Once again harking back to *Difference and Repetition*'s definition of the intensive as the realm of the dissolved self, the authors argue that the practice of creating a BwO should not be equated with the activity of an already constituted or differenciated subjective form.[131] The task of making a BwO is never simply comparable to the practice by which a well-formed subject interprets or attributes meaning to its own existence. Instead, this practice involves "opening [*ouvrir*] the body to connections (…), passages and distributions of intensity" that are not subjective in nature.[132] The masochist's BwO once again exemplifies the stakes here. When the masochist creates a BwO, this is not so that they can interpret or understand themselves and their desires anew. It is rather a matter of constructing an entire assemblage that effectively alters the *intensive* forces by which the bodies involved within it find themselves affected by one another.[133] Thus, when we create a BwO, "there is no longer either a self [*moi*] or other [*autre*]" giving sense to the entire process.[134] Now, to be sure, as we will see very shortly, this does not at all mean that the strata of the "Self [*moi*], the subject, the historical, social, or individual person" are completely irrelevant from the perspective of the ethical practice of creating a BwO.[135] Just as experimentation on the BwO can take up bodily forms, so too, these subjective dimensions can become crucial matters for experimentation.[136] The important point to note, nevertheless, is that the BwO only causes intensive matters to pass that are essentially non-subjective. In a *spatium* where only intensities reign, what passes are continuums of deterritorialisation, flows of intensity and asubjective conjunctions: "Flows of intensity, their fluids, their fibres, their continuums and

[129] ATP 155-156.
[130] Deleuze and Guattari draw this conclusion in relation to the example of courtly love. But the same principles apply in both cases. ATP 156-157.
[131] DR 259.
[132] ATP 160.
[133] ATP 156.
[134] ATP 156 (translation modified).
[135] ATP 162.
[136] ATP 162.

conjunctions of affects, the wind, fine segmentation, microperceptions, have replaced the world of the subject [*sujet*]."[137]

This framing of the BwO as intensive also indicates that for Deleuze and Guattari, the BwO is precisely the ethical practice *by which* we can make our lives express the Aionic temporality of the plane of consistency. This identity between the BwO and the plane of consistency is of course already suggested in their initial definition of that plane: "the plane of consistency *or* body without organs".[138] In the BwO plateau, this identity is further clarified from a temporal perspective. Indeed, for Deleuze and Guattari, the intensive relations that emerge in the BwO are irreducible to the chronology (the linear 'before' and 'after') that pertains between well-constituted subjects, organs and organisms.[139] A reference to childhood clarifies the stakes here: "If [the BwO] is tied to childhood", in the relative sense that as an egg it 'pre-exists' the differenciated forms of the adult organism, it is also "not the child 'before' the adult, or the mother 'before' the child: it is the strict contemporaneousness [*contemporanéité*] of the adult, of the adult and the child, their map of comparative densities and intensities, and all of the variations of that map."[140] All this suggests that the BwO constitutes part of the temporal locus of becoming where elements no longer communicate across the linear or chronological distribution of formed organisms. The BwO affirms a "floating time" where elements relate to one another relatively "independently [*indépendamment*] of the chronometric or chronological values that time assumes in [its] other modes".[141] Those elements, to be sure, still "distribute themselves on the BwO, but they distribute themselves independently of the forms of the organism; forms become contingent, organs are no longer anything more than intensities that are produced, flows, thresholds, and gradients."[142] Insofar as it establishes these intensive connections that are irreducible to the extensions and forms of the organism, the BwO therefore plays an

[137] ATP 162.
[138] ATP 56 (emphasis added).
[139] "Unlike history, becoming cannot be conceptualized in terms of past and future. (….) Every becoming is a block of coexistence." ATP 292.
[140] ATP 164.
[141] ATP 263.
[142] ATP 164.

equivalent role to Deleuze's differenciator of difference in *Difference and Repetition*. As Nathan Widder helpfully puts this point: "The BwO is the differenciator that relates these [intensive] materials through their difference, making it 'necessarily a Place, necessarily a Plane, necessarily a Collectivity (assembling elements, things, plants, animals, tools, people, powers, and fragments of all of these…)'."[143] The only caveat we must add here is that if the BwO plays this determinant function, it no longer does so as an agent that 'belongs' to a structure. Indeed, if the BwO belongs to anything, that is the plane of consistency itself, which, from this temporal perspective, can also be defined as the "potential totality of all BwO's"—a totality the temporality of which each BwO affirms in its own machinic operation.[144]

But how is the BwO *itself* practically produced? If so far Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the BwO has remained broadly in line with *Difference and Repetition*'s notion of an intensive differenciator, on this question important differences begin to emerge. Here, the authors provide a general formula:

> This is how it should be done: Lodge [*installer*] yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place [*lieu*] on it, find potential movements of deterritorialisation, possible lines of flight, experience [*éprouver*] them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, always have a small piece of new earth [*terre*]. It is through a meticulous relation [*rapport*] with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and releasing [*dégager*] continuous intensities for a BwO. Connect, conjugate, continue: a whole 'diagram', as opposed to still signifying and subjective programs. We are in a social formation; first see how it is stratified for us and in us at the place [*place*] where we are; then descend from the strata to the deeper assemblage within which we are held [*pris*]; gently tip the assemblage, making it pass over to the side of the plane of consistency. It is only there that the BwO reveals itself for what it is: connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities. You have constructed your

[143] Widder, 2012: 144. The quotation used by Widder is taken from: ATP 161; cf. DR 254.
[144] ATP 157.

> own little machine, ready when needed to be plugged into other collective machines.[145]

As this passage clarifies, though likewise intensive, the ethical experimentation recommended by Deleuze and Guattari does not exactly correspond to the effort by which *Difference and Repetition* would have us become an intensive differenciator. Far from simply following the rule not to explicate ourselves too much, here, we are guided by other, more "concrete rules [*règles concrètes*]."[146] Now, these rules are *concrete* in the precise sense that they directly concern the strata or the territories that actually compose us as human subjects. As Deleuze and Guattari write above, only "a meticulous relation" with these stratified formations can liberate lines of flight and movements of deterritorialisation. This means that even if BwOs destratify by escaping from the demands imposed by a given stratum, they do not do so by destroying, ignoring or avoiding the territorial milieu within which they find themselves explicated.[147] A destratifying escape is never an act of territorial evasion. Indeed, the "rule" for generating destratifying or intensive movements in the BwO can even be said to be exactly the inverse of this.[148] Not only does the creation of such movements require that one "lodge" or install oneself in a given stratum. That creation also involves a whole labour of analysis and experimentation with the "opportunities" that are offered by a given stratum.[149] Otherwise put, we might say that the practice of creating a BwO—like the functioning of abstract machines—is one that involves *both sides* of the territorial assemblage.[150] Although the BwO clearly expresses the temporality of the destratified side of assemblages (the plane of consistency or becoming), it does so only *insofar* as ethical subjects directly engage their other, territorial side, only insofar as we "gently tip the [territorial] assemblage, making it pass over to the side of the plane of consistency."

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[145] ATP 161 (translation of "*terre*" modified).
[146] This expression is first introduced in the conclusion of *A Thousand Plateaus*, but the focus on rules pervades the entire work, as the last section already indicated. cf. ATP 70, 150, 163, 501-514.
[147] cf. Deleuze, 2003: 48-52.
[148] ATP 150.
[149] *Anti-Oedipus* also recommends this type of strategic analysis: "In each case we must go back by way of old lands, study their nature, their density; we must seek to discover how the machinic indices are grouped on each of these lands that permit going beyond them." AO 318; cf. AO 338-341.
[150] cf. ATP 142, 144.

For Deleuze and Guattari, two main reasons explain why the ethical task of creating a BwO must involve this type of rapport with the territories that historically constitute us. The first reason is what we might call *cautionary*, and it refers to the "many dangers" that can be associated with this specific experimental practice.[151] As the authors remind us, there is nothing inherently reassuring or positive about the practice of creating a BwO, "because you can botch it."[152] There is always the possibility that the creation of a BwO will go wrong. If the necessary cautionary steps are not taken, we can end up with an 'empty' or 'cancerous' BwO. We can end up, that is, either with a body that is *ineffective* in creating intensities to pass because it has gone too far in dissolving itself (an empty body), or else with a body that endlessly grows like a cancer and becomes too *effective* in proliferating fascist stratifications and organisations (the cancerous body).[153] In particularly disastrous instances, the BwO can even lead to a black hole, or to death itself.[154] And it is partly in order to avoid these dangers that an "art of prudence [*prudence*]" with regard to the strata that presently constitute us is required.[155] This art involves recognising that stratification—though it separates us from the plane of consistency—is not the most disastrous outcome we can face. "Staying stratified—organised, signified, subjected—is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever."[156] To avoid these dangers, the art of prudence therefore also requires us to always draw the plane of consistency with regard to the limits and possibilities of our particular stratified constitution. "If you free it with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without prudence [*prudence*], then instead of drawing the plane you will be killed,

[151] These dangers are not exclusive to the BwO. More generally, they also apply to lines of flight themselves. cf. ATP 162, 227-231.
[152] ATP 149.
[153] ATP 150, 163.
[154] ATP 149, cf. 229-231.
[155] The English translation of *A Thousand Plateaus* renders the French '*prudence*' as 'caution'. But I contend that "prudence" is a more accurate translation here, not only because *prudence* is the word consistently used in the French, but also because prudence carries a sense of *judiciousness* and *discernibility* that is wider than the mere *cautionary* avoidance of dangers. This discourse on prudence should also be read in conjunction with Deleuze and Guattari's repeated emphases on "sobriety" throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*. ATP 160; cf. ATP 344.
[156] ATP 161.

plunged into a black hole, or even dragged toward catastrophe."[157] Retaining some relation to stratified material is therefore vital when crafting a BwO; only by exercising a prudent rapport with the strata can we have the chance of avoiding that practice's many dangers—and even then, there are never any certainties.

There is also a second, *ontological* reason for establishing a meticulous rapport with the strata, which relates more directly to the *proper* functioning of the plane of consistency itself.[158] As the last section noted the plane of consistency is in no way a chaotic or undifferentiated aggregate of matters.[159] In its *proper* functioning, that destratifying plane operates under certain rules. It operates as a *continuum* of intensities, as a *combined* emission of particles and as a *conjunction* of deterritorialised flows. And as we also saw, it is only insofar as the plane is drawn by a machine that remains *connected* to stratified assemblages that it is able to take up these rules as its own proper functioning. Now, turning again to Deleuze and Guattari's general formula for how to create a BwO, we clearly see that, beyond mere cautionary considerations, these conditions pertaining to the plane's functioning also provide another motive for closely relating to the strata when destratifying through the BwO. In effect, by retaining a meticulous relation to the strata, we ensure that the BwO is able to become a piece of the plane of consistency *in its proper functioning*. We are able to ensure, that is, that the plane operates as a temporal *continuum* of intensities, as the *combined* emission of particles and as the *conjunction* of deterritorialised flows. Or, as we have already seen the authors write: "It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight (….) *It is only there that the BwO* [and the plane to which it belongs] *reveals itself for what it is*: *connections* of desires, *conjunctions* of flows,

[157] ATP 161. This discourse on prudence is not exclusive to *A Thousand Plateaus*. Indeed, *Anti-Oedipus* too recommends "great patience, great prudence" (AO 318, translation modified). From this perspective, claims like Lawlor's (2019: 445) that there is a "difference in tone between *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* (…) a difference between reckless abandon and prudence" do not seem justified.

[158] I call this second reason *ontological* following Deleuze and Guattari's own classification of the plane of consistency as "the ontological unity of substance." ATP 154.

[159] ATP 70.

continuums of intensities."[160] True, a certain dint of prudence or sobriety is still required for this type of engagement with the strata.[161] But this sobriety should not be confused with a purely *cautionary* avoidance of dangers. Although the dangers involved in the creation of a BwO are certainly to be avoided, Deleuze and Guattari do not recommend a close rapport with the strata *simply* so that we can avoid falling into their traps.[162] Implicit in these recommendations is also the insistence that "the sobriety of the assemblages is what makes for the richness of the Machine's effects."[163] Put differently, we must continually relate our bodies without organs to the strata because only in that way can we maximise the effects that they have on the assemblages that we are attempting to destratify. Indeed, without such due care for the strata, our destratifications on the plane of consistency risk becoming meaningless and ineffective as a response to the dominant reality at hand.[164] Only by retaining a morsel of the strata can we therefore ensure that the machine created by our BwO aligns itself, or affirms, that temporality of becoming which the plane of consistency—in its proper functioning—is capable of expressing.[165] "You don't reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly stratifying."[166] Indeed, only by precisely and meticulously relating to our strata can we ensure that our BwO not only effectively plugs itself into other collective machines, but also does so as a temporal continuum of intensities, as a combined emission particles and as a conjunction of deterritorialised flows—that is, as "a whole 'diagram' [of becoming] against still signifying and subjective programs."[167]

[160] ATP 161 (emphasis added).
[161] ATP 6.
[162] Commentators have often missed this, with Protevi (2018: 111) and Hansen (2000) going as far as criticising Deleuze and Guattari for failing to attribute any positive value to the strata other than "as a negative condition for further experiment". However, this purely cautionary reading seems hard to square with the authors' insistence that the proper functioning of the plane of consistency remains *dependent* on the strata, that only on the strata does the plane (or the BwO) reveal itself for what it *is*.
[163] ATP 344.
[164] ATP 160.
[165] cf. ATP 188.
[166] ATP 160.
[167] ATP 161.

6.3. Affirming becoming *with* history

We have seen Deleuze and Guattari argue that the ethical practice by which we can begin to affirm the plane of consistency's temporality of becoming, the BwO, necessitates a careful and prudent relation to those stratified formations that constitute us as human beings. The question I now want to confront, before closing this chapter, is whether this argument makes any difference with regards to the problem of history that still persists in *Difference and Repetition*. As the last chapter argued, Deleuze's ethics of making oneself an intensive differenciator remains problematic not only because it fails to acknowledge its own constitutive implication with the historical, but also because it neglects to develop a strategy whereby the anti-productive tendencies that follow from such implication might become displaced in practice. Are Deleuze and Guattari able to convincingly resolve this problem in *A Thousand Plateaus*, particularly with their emphasis on the prudence that must go into the creation of a BwO? This is the question I now want to consider.

Now, we cannot fail to notice that in contrast to *Difference and Repetition*, the model of temporal ethics developed by *A Thousand Plateaus* gives a great pride of place to actual or historical factors. As the last section demonstrated, Deleuze and Guattari argue that we must involve ourselves with the strata that actually constitute us not only so that we can avoid our own "demented or suicidal collapse, which brings [the strata] back down on us heavier than ever."[168] More broadly, we must also relate ourselves to the actuality of strata so that our little BwO machine can begin to resonate with the temporality of becoming that the plane of consistency—in its *proper* functioning—is able to express: "*connections* of desires, *conjunctions* of flows, *continuums* of intensities."[169] Indeed, as we saw, because in its optimal functioning the plane of consistency follows certain rules, it is equally significant that, in attempting to create an ethical machine that expresses that plane's temporality, we follow the concrete rule of directly and prudently relating ourselves to the actuality of the strata that surround us. As Deleuze and Guattari note, we should never assume that the

[168] ATP 161.
[169] ATP 161 (emphasis added).

territorial aspects of assemblages only ever act as "a certain resistance or inertia" against the variability of the plane of consistency, "for even 'constants' are essential to the determination through which the variation passes".[170] Indeed, far from dismissing the (relatively) stable actuality of strata, what we, as ethical subjects, must recognise, is that it is only by "retain[ing] just enough of the strata [that our BwO machine] extract from them variables that operate in the plane of consistency as its own functions."[171]

By insisting on these points, Deleuze and Guattari depart in significant respects from the temporal ethics of *Difference and Repetition*. Indeed, if, as the last chapter argued, the early Deleuze does not take up Simondon in considering intensive movements as involving an irreducible historicity, this is precisely what Deleuze and Guattari do with this emphasis on the relation between the plane of consistency, the BwO, and the strata. It is as though, with the help of Guattari, Deleuze came to agree with Simondon that the intensive movements of which the plane of becoming is composed are always "historical and local", and that any process that affirms the creativity of becoming, insofar as it remains dependent on 'prior' stratified states, always carries with it an irreducible "historical aspect".[172] Furthermore, if, as I also wrote above, the BwO still broadly resembles what *Difference and* Repetition calls a differenciator (in the precise sense that the BwO is defined as an intensive *spatium* where only unextended and unqualified intensities pass and circulate), no longer do Deleuze and Guattari argue that we become this differenciating agent by exclusively relating ourselves to the intensive order of individuality. Similarly, no longer are stratified or actual formations purely positioned as aggregates with which we must seek *not* to explicate ourselves, as *Difference and Repetition* had cautioned. Indeed, though they remain actual in Deleuze and Guattari's temporal ethics, the strata are now classified as the very "tool[s] for which a new use must be invented" in practice.[173] Strata are the historical tools that we must *meticulously* engage if our lives are to have the chance of expressing the plane of consistency's

[170] ATP 100.
[171] ATP 70.
[172] Simondon, 2013: 81, 84.
[173] ATP 189; cf. MS 327.

temporality of becoming.

This stress on the constitutive role of history or actuality for ethics is not merely reluctant on Deleuze and Guattari's part.[174] And yet, this conclusion will remain unsatisfying to those upholding the view that *A Thousand Plateaus* continues to oppose history to becoming. Many commentators have argued that this text continues to be guided by an emphasis on the *primacy* of becoming over history.[175] In taking this approach, commentators add, Deleuze and Guattari also end up with an all "too stark and abstract (…) opposition between Becoming and History".[176] Now, if one accepts these arguments, then the view that I have thus far attributed to Deleuze and Guattari's temporal ethics that it *welcomes* the constitutive and determinant role of historical factors becomes less sustainable. It appears further undermined by the following assertion made by Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?*:

> History today still designates only the set of conditions, however, recent they may be, from which one turns away [*on se détourne*] in order to become, that is to say, in order to create something new. (….) How could something come from history? Without history, becoming would remain indeterminate [*indéterminé*] and unconditioned [*inconditionné*], but becoming is not historical. (….) The event itself [*lui-même*] needs becoming as an unhistorical element.[177]

Does this passage not suggest that history cannot play the *determinant* role in Deleuze and Guattari's temporal ethics that I have thus far attributed to it? Does it not suggest that, for the authors, the planes of history and becoming cannot work together in the way I have emphasised?

It certainly cannot be denied that *A Thousand Plateaus* continues to uphold a strong

[174] Despite elsewhere (2012: 141, passim) reversing this view, Craig Lundy (2009: 199) has proposed this 'reluctance' reading, writing that "Deleuze is principally concerned with the expression of irreducible becomings, and history is only reluctantly acknowledged as a necessary constituent of this."

[175] Deleuze and Guattari's prioritisation of becoming is often taken among commentators as an indicator of their *disdain* for the territorial, historical and actual aspects of human existence. This is the misreading that Lorraine (2011: 137-145), as a prominent example, adopts.

[176] This is the inaccurate conclusion reached by Christian Kerslake's (2008: 35) in an otherwise important exploration of the relation between Deleuze's thought and the British universal historian Arnold Toynbee.

[177] Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 96. See also: Deleuze, 1995: 170.

distinction between history and becoming, just as it is true, as indicated above, that becoming remains the privileged term in that text's temporal ethics. As Deleuze neatly summarises this dual fact in a subsequent interview: "'Becomings' are much more important than history in *A Thousand Plateaus*. They're two quite different things."[178] However, just as the strong distinction Deleuze and Guattari draw between the strata and the plane of consistency does not prevent those two domains from productively interacting with, and depending upon, each other, so too, historical factors and becoming should not be taken as *opposed* simply because they are *distinct*. If becoming *itself* is not historical, in the particular sense that it is not *entirely* reducible to the categories and dynamics of history, this is not to suggest that becoming takes place 'outside' or 'beyond' *all* history. Indeed, if becoming is never entirely reducible to history, it does nonetheless still rely on the latter as its condition of possibility. As Deleuze claims in an interview, even if becoming remains distinct from history, there are "all sorts of correlations and echoes between them. Becoming begins in history and returns to it, but it is not of history."[179] On this issue, furthermore, we cannot fail to notice the importance of Deleuze and Guattari's above-quoted claim that *without* history, becoming would remain *indeterminate* and *unconditioned*. This claim indicates that practices for the affirmation of novelty cannot simply succeed in abstraction from the dominant mechanisms that have historically constituted us as subjects. To remain meaningful and effective, destratifying practices cannot simply interest themselves in the new without any relation to the 'old'. They must also seek to pragmatically *determine* and *condition* themselves in relation to a given dominant reality.[180] In the context of the practice of creating ourselves as a BwO, that is, as a machine that expresses the temporality of the plane of consistency, this pragmatic imperative assumes a very particular shape. As Deleuze and Guattari assert, in order to create an effective, destratifying BwO, "we must define what

[178] Deleuze, 1995: 30.
[179] Deleuze, 2006b: 377.
[180] "And how can we unhook ourselves from the points of subjectification that secure us, nail us down to a dominant reality?" ATP 160.

comes to pass and what does not pass, what causes passage and prevents it."[181] And crucially, as repeatedly noted, it is by *prudently* relating ourselves to our historical strata that we can carry out this positive work of definition—that we can determine our BwO as a properly destratifying connection of desires, conjunction of flows and continuum of intensities. Without this prudence in relation to the actuality of strata, we might end up with a purely chaotic or undifferentiated piece of the plane of consistency; we might end up with a BwO that lets only *indeterminate* elements with no clearly defined destratifying role pass and circulate. But *with* that relation, what we can create is a little machine that lets pass *only* those elements that *do* have a clearly discernible role in destratifying our given social formations.[182] We can create a BwO that lets pass only those elements that express the "pure determination of intensity."[183] And in this sense, history remains absolutely necessary for an ethical practice seeking to affirm the temporality of the new. Indeed, insofar as it allows us to clearly determine that practice's direction, history can even be considered as one of the *positive conditions* for the affirmation of temporal novelty in the BwO.

It might be countered that Deleuze and Guattari's focus on the strata does not exactly map onto the dimension of history, that when they speak of the strata, they are "not doing history".[184] Relatedly, it might be objected that when Deleuze and Guattari speak of practices of becoming, they are primarily interested in "molecular" as opposed to "molar" elements and movements: "Yes, all becomings are molecular."[185] Does this not suggest that the authors are interested less in that molar historical dimension of societies "that goes toward the large numbers and the mass phenomena", than they are in those intensive elements expressing only "the molar direction that on the contrary penetrates into singularities, their interactions

[181] ATP 152.
[182] "Your synthesis of disparate elements will be all the *stronger* if you proceed with a sober gesture, an act of consistency, capture or extraction that works in a material that is no meagre but prodigiously simplified, creatively limited, selected." ATP 344.
[183] ATP 164.
[184] ATP 119, 121.
[185] ATP 275. For prominent uses of this distinction in *A Thousand Plateaus*, see: ATP 57-60, 195-204, 215-231.

and connections at a distance or between different orders"?[186] Now, it certainly cannot be denied that when Deleuze and Guattari speak of the strata, they are not doing history in the traditional, molar sense. They are not doing history as it is written in those textbooks and chronicles focused on detailing a given society's "great resounding events".[187] Their opposition to such a model of history is well known: "History has never comprehended nomadism, the book has never comprehended the outside."[188] This interest in becoming over history is of course well reflected in Deleuze and Guattari's account of stratification, which, as noted above, focuses on the double articulation of major strata in part so that the *destratifying* possibilities for each of those formations can be more clearly specified.[189] Correspondingly, when the authors study the operation of diverse "regimes of signs" in the fifth plateau of their text, it is a focus on the molecular lines of flight that each of those regimes makes possible that drives the analysis forward.[190] Once again, however, Deleuze and Guattari's interest in molecular lines and movements does not occur in *isolation* from a consideration of distinctively molar lines and formations. Indeed, as they write in their introductory plateau, the real "enemy" of their ethical philosophy is not so much the molar aspect of societies, but the inflexible *dualisms* and *oppositions* that might be established between categories such as the molar and molecular.[191] From this standpoint, it most assuredly cannot be denied that "a society is defined by its lines of flight, which are molecular. (….) The reverse, however, is also true: molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to the molar organisations to reshuffle their segments".[192] Regarding the relation between the strata and the plane of becoming, the same principle applies. The molar movements that occur on the strata are vital for the intensive or molecular lines of flight that the BwO creates: "indeed it is from the forms and

[186] AO 308.
[187] NP 4.
[188] ATP Similarly: "All history does is translate a coexistence of becomings into a succession." ATP 430.
[189] Holland, 2013: 56
[190] ATP 111-148. For an excellent account of this study, see: Thornton, 2018: 232-240.
[191] ATP 20-21.
[192] ATP 238, 216-17.

subjects of the first plane that the second constantly tears the particles between which there are no longer relationships of speed and slowness".[193] Hence, not only is there no absolute opposition between the molecular and the molar, stratified or historical aspects of existence, but the latter are even *necessary* for any ethical practice focused on engendering those molecular, destratifying and intensive movements that express the temporality of becoming.[194] In Craig Lundy's accurate summary: "while Deleuze and Guattari are clearly in favour of fostering creativity and promoting freedom, it must be remembered that this is not necessarily at the expense of the relative, molar strata or historical processes. (….) On the contrary, what we are shown here is the immense importance of historical processes and relational mechanisms that link strata with lines of flight in order to produce 'a small plot of new land.'"[195]

This acknowledgement that a temporal ethics seeking to affirm the new must involve itself with history is not merely incidental from the perspective of the problems that continue to plague *Difference and Repetition*. As the last chapter argued with the help of Guattari, one of the issues arising from Deleuze's earlier ethics of intensive quantities is its incapacity to successfully negotiate its constitutive involvement with anti-productive tendencies. Because Deleuze does not recognise history's constitutive role for that ethics, he also fails to insist on the necessity of a practical strategy for displacing the anti-productive elements that the imbrication of ethics with history necessarily entails. Now, it should be clear from our preceding discussion of dangers that Deleuze and Guattari do not claim to expunge all anti-productive tendencies from their proposed ethics of creating a BwO. Indeed, if there is nothing "reassuring" about this ethics, this is because the BwO can take shape as *both* anti-production *and* production, as "non-desire as well as desire."[196] That is, although this ethical practice can certainly produce and let pass intensities and flows that express the radical, destratifying temporality of the plane of consistency, it can also give rise to "totalitarian and

[193] Deleuze and Parnet, 2007: 133.
[194] cf. Patton, 2009: 49-50.
[195] Lundy, 2012: 141.
[196] ATP 149. This view that production is necessarily tied to anti-production is also put forward in *Anti-Oedipus*: cf. AO 47-49.

fascist BwOs, terrifying caricatures of the plane of consistency."[197] The key difference that emerges here vis-à-vis *Difference and Repetition* is that these anti-productive tendencies are no longer taken as completely isolatable from the presumably 'independent' functioning of the differenciating agents Deleuze and Guattari ethically advocate. Neither are those anti-productive tendencies simply the 'negative' effects that emerge when those differenciating agents let themselves become involved, or mediated by, 'the identical'.[198] Because the BwO is always engendered in close relation to a determined stratified situation, those anti-productive tendencies are likewise always an *inherent* or *immanent* feature of that practice. As Deleuze and Guattari rhetorically affirm in *Anti-Oedipus*: "what is not escape *and social investment at the same time?*"[199]

Crucially, by imbuing their temporal ethics with a recognition of the constitutive role of the historical, Deleuze and Guattari are also able to formulate the strategy in relation to the historical that the last chapter identified as lacking in *Difference and Repetition*. From the perspective of *A Thousand Plateaus*, temporal ethics is never simply a matter of passing and producing *any* intensities and flows, as if that creation alone will suffice to connect us to the temporality to-come of the plane of consistency. Creation and production always involve stagnation and anti-production. "That is why the material problem confronting schizoanalysis is knowing whether we have it within our means to make the selection, to distinguish the BwO from its doubles: empty vitreous bodies, cancerous bodies, totalitarian and fascist."[200] Temporal ethics must always be conjoined by a strategic practice of

> distinguishing [*distinguer*] within desire that which pertains to stratic proliferation, or else too-violent destratification, and that which pertains to the construction of the plane of consistency (keep an eye out for all that is fascist inside us, and also for the suicidal and demented). The plane of consistency is not simply that which is constituted by the sum of all BwO's. There are things it rejects; the BwO chooses, as a function of the abstract machine that draws it. Even within

[197] ATP 163.
[198] cf. DR 117.
[199] AO 341.
[200] ATP 165.

> a BwO (…), we must distinguish what can be composed on the plane and what cannot.[201]

To create a BwO that expresses the temporality of the plane of consistency, we must thus strategically distinguish between different types of intensities, flows and connections. We must not only haphazardly produce but also *select* the 'right' types of destratifying elements, particles and flows. And once again, for Deleuze and Guattari, it is precisely by adopting an active relation with the strata that have historically constituted us as subjects that we can strategically cause the 'right' conjugated flows to pass and escape: "It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and releasing continuous intensities for a BwO."[202] The actuality of assemblages and the strata is thus always absolutely "necessary" for warding off the equally intensive but nonetheless totalitarian forms that a BwO can take up.[203] Here, an attention to history becomes the main resource with which we can *strategically* ensure that our BwO does not cause to pass those intensities that bear only "the imprint of equivalence and identity" in relation to repressive social structures.[204] History here becomes essential for the strategic task of providing our BwO its best chance to practically express the radical temporality of the plane of becoming. This is not to say that there are 'right' intensities and flows that we can *always* rely upon to ward off the anti-productive tendencies of *all* BwOs. Like politics, temporal ethics "is active experimentation, since we do not know in advance which way a line is going to turn out."[205] However, equipped with the recognition that history always plays a constitutive role in ethics, we can at least begin to take practical steps to prevent that ethics from repeating the *worst* repressive features of the 'old'; we can begin to strategically rectify, "piece by piece, blow by blow", the inherent tendency towards reification that Deleuze's earlier ethics of intensive quantities had failed to address.[206] But for this strategy to succeed, it must be likewise be guided by the view that a temporality of novelty

[201] ATP 165.
[202] cf. ATP 180.
[203] ATP 158.
[204] MS 325.
[205] Deleuze and Parnet, 2007: 137.
[206] ATP 337.

and becoming cannot be practically expressed or affirmed *independently* of all historical or empirical content. That temporality always remains to-come as something to be continually created in practice and *in relation to* a contingent domain of stratified states of affairs: "we do not arrive [*arrive*] on it, we cannot arrive on it, we can never be done with accessing it, it is a limit."[207]

Ultimately, this recognition that history and determined forms of actuality have a positive role to play in the ethical task of relating oneself to a temporality of becoming also distinguishes Deleuze and Guattari's temporal ethics from Bergson's. Now, it cannot be denied that, like Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari remain interested in fostering an ethical relation to time that is irreducible to our habitual patterns of existence.[208] It is equally true that like Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari frame their temporal ethics as a project that "is continually in the process of constructing itself."[209] However, these broad similarities should not be taken as an indication that the practice of creating oneself as a BwO is *intuitive* in the Bergsonian sense of that word, as some commentators have suggested.[210] As Ray Brassier correctly notes, Deleuze and Guattari's methodological sophistication in *A Thousand Plateaus* "precludes any appeals to the 'intuition' or 'lived experience' of the real."[211] Indeed, as the preceding will have clarified, for the authors, temporal ethics is never a matter of attempting to reach "the bed-rock of original nature" by means of the "direct vision of the mind by the mind", as it is for Bergson.[212] Temporal ethics is never a matter of "search[ing] below the social accretions, [of] get[ting] down to Life, of which human societies, as indeed

[207] ATP 150 (translation modified).
[208] Protevi, 2018: 102.
[209] ATP 164.
[210] This view is prominently suggested by Lorraine (2011), who draws several comparisons between the BwO and Bergsonian intuition, going as far as suggesting that "[c]onstructing a body without organs entails a notion of the body that fosters an open-ended, intuitive awareness of the durational whole" (86). Unsurprisingly, given this equation between the BwO and intuition, Lorraine ends up criticising Deleuze and Guattari for not attributing enough emphasis to the positive role that territorial formations can play in ethical life (139-140). Leaving aside the issue that Deleuze and Guattari nowhere explicitly define the BwO as intuitive, this critique remains unconvincing for failing to grasp the fact that unlike Bergson's intuition, Deleuze and Guattari's BwO can be created *only* on the basis of a *meticulous* relation to the territorial strata.
[211] Brassier, 2018: 270.
[212] TSMR 83; CM 20.

the human species altogether, are but manifestations."[213] Indeed, if Deleuze and Guattari's temporal ethics continues to be guided by a meticulous method, this method, far from directing us *away* from social accretions, always directs us *towards* the concrete forms of actuality that our stratified existence as human subjects implies. In recognition that our forms of social investment are also the "*enabling* conditions" for the ethical task of practically relating ourselves to the plane of consistency's novel temporality, this ethics demands that we *involve* ourselves with the social accretions that function as the concrete side of our machinic assemblages.[214] In this sense, just as we might say that the late Deleuze attempts to politically radicalise Bergson's schema of fabulation, so too, Deleuze and Guattari can be seen as radicalising the position first suggested by Bergson in *The Two Sources* to the effect that the operation of historical machineries has a productive role to play in the project of temporal ethics.[215] But this productive role is no longer confined to the assistance that historical machineries might provide in 'diffusing' and 'expanding' a "mystical experience [which,] taken in its immediacy", remains purified of all forms of social and historical involvement.[216] Not only is there no such unmediated experience to be found in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In that text, machines, and the history they imply, become the very means *by which* we offer ourselves the best chance of ethically relating ourselves to the temporality of the new, *whilst* avoiding the *worst* of the dangers that task can involve.

6.4 Conclusion: machinic chances

This chapter has examined Deleuze and Guattari's temporal ethics in *A Thousand Plateaus*. I have argued that for the authors, the intensive ethical practice by which we

[213] TSMR 100.
[214] Brassier, 2018: 270.
[215] Deleuze famously declares an interview that "[w]e ought to take up Bergson's notion of fabulation and give it a political meaning" (Deleuze, 1995: 174). In *Cinema 2*, Deleuze clarifies how this politicisation might operate with reference to the cinematic works of Pierre Perrault and Jean Rouch. cf. Deleuze, 1989: 147-155

For more on Deleuze and Bergson's respective concepts of fabulation, see also: Bogue, 2007: 91-106; Bogue, 2010: 14-48; Mengue, 2008: 218-239.
[216] TSMR 99.

connect ourselves to a plane of temporal becoming—the creation of a BwO—must always proceed through a close and meticulous relation to the historically determined, stratified formations that constitute us as human subjects. I have also argued that in upholding this view, Deleuze and Guattari do not only overcome an abstract opposition between history and becoming. In a certain sense, by displacing this abstract opposition, they are also able to recommend a potentially fruitful strategy for dealing with the historical problems of anti-production that still lingered in *Difference and Repetition*.

Although I have focused my reading in this chapter on the differences between *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Difference and Repetition*, the ethos informing Deleuze and Guattari's temporal ethics in the former text should not be of interest only to Deleuze scholars. Indeed, insofar as it attempts to directly grapple with the implication between ethics and history that I have shown in this thesis to persist as a problem in Bergson's and Levinas' thought, Deleuze and Guattari's text also has something to offer to those two ethical philosophies. Perhaps, this ethos of relating oneself to actuality as a means of affirming temporal difference can also offer us a chance to develop a *successful resolution* to problems of history that persist in Bergson's and Levinas' respective conceptions of temporal ethics—even if, as Deleuze and Guattari hold, this ethos can provide no absolute guarantees.

Does this mean that Deleuze and Guattari's specific indications for creating ourselves as a BwO should become a necessary feature of any ethics seeking to relate ethical subjects to the temporality of the new? Does this mean that we should develop Bergsonian and Levinasian conceptions of the BwO and the plane of consistency? Is this how we definitively resolve the problems of history that still persist in Bergson's and Levinas' ethical philosophies? These are the questions that I want to consider in conclusion to this thesis.

Conclusion

Bergson's influence on the entire trajectory of contemporary European philosophy cannot be underestimated. In trying to think time in isolation from the 'mundane' representations of space, measurement and number, Bergson has not only placed the question of a truly differential temporality at the centre of contemporary philosophical reflection. By insisting that human beings possess an intuitive capacity for immediately connecting themselves with that temporality, Bergson has also challenged us to think—*ethically*—about how we might become exposed to time's novelty, such that its differential force can begin to nourish and revivify our everyday being.

This thesis has in no way sought to diminish the relevance of these Bergsonian openings. However, as the first two chapters argued, while Bergson's model of temporal ethics is most assuredly inspirational, it also remains premised on a problematic relation to history. While Bergson's insistence on the intuition has certainly stimulated us to think about the question of temporal ethics anew, his philosophy also remains insufficiently attuned to that modality's *constitutive implication* with the historical, and to the problem that this implication creates. By framing the intuition as an immediate knowledge of duration that frees itself of all social 'prejudice', Bergson has not sufficiently contended with the fact that—*as* constitutively involved with a socio-historical domain—the ethical method of intuition can itself tend towards the *replication* of those forms of knowledge and sensibility that have historically prevented humanity from establishing a contact with the new. In this way, I have argued, Bergson stops short of providing a successful resolution to the *problem of history* that manifests itself at the heart of his ethical philosophy.

Beyond pointing to this problem in Bergson's thought, this thesis has also focused on two self-professed Bergsonians, Levinas and Deleuze, to assess whether their own ethical philosophies formulate a more adequate resolution to it. With regard to Levinas, my argument has been that his model of temporal ethics in both *Totality and Infinity* and

Otherwise than Being, despite distancing itself in crucial respects from Bergson's intuitive ethics, not only remains equally caught up with history at its most constitutive level. As a result of his refusal to acknowledge this constitutive implication between ethics and the historical, Levinas also remains incapable of formulating an adequate strategic response to the dangers that such implication presents for the ethics of relating oneself to the new. I developed a similar line of argument in relation to Deleuze's early work in *Difference and Repetition*, by insisting that Deleuze's effort to divorce an intensive temporal ethics from the actual does not quite succeed in liberating his philosophy from all trace of the problem of history.

Throughout this thesis, I have maintained that a constitutive implication with history presents both opportunities and *dangers* for the task of ethically relating subjects to the new. While, as Bergson claims, the intuition's involvement with science can certainly enhance its rigour and precision as an ethical method, that involvement can also lead the latter to replicate those forms of thinking and seeing that have historically done violence to the novelty of time *qua* duration. Similarly, whilst, as Levinas insists, certain familial arrangements can perhaps establish an ethical relation to the infinite time of the Other, their history can also involve ethics with a tendency to do violence to certain kinds of (primarily feminine) alterity. Likewise, whilst existing social structures provide us with the opportunity to ethically become the differenciator of their differences, as Deleuze argues, our involvement with those structures can also lead our affirmative ethical practices to repeat their most repressive and anti-productive aspects. Whichever ethical modality one chooses, history presents as many opportunities as it does risks for the project of temporal ethics, and a successful temporal ethics is one that *accepts* and *negotiates* the potential dangers that history can introduce into our efforts to relate ourselves to the new.

Of all the ethical models considered in this thesis, I hold that Deleuze and Guattari's provides the most convincing response as to how we might afford ourselves the chance of avoiding the dangers that can be associated with the task of temporal ethics. Because

Deleuze and Guattari *avow* their ethics' necessary implication with historical factors, they are able to offer us concrete suggestions as to how ethical praxis can seek to avoid the worst risks that follow from such implication. By avowing the constitutive role of history for ethics, Deleuze and Guattari are capable of recommending an *ethos* of prudence—in relation to precisely those stratified formations that have historically constituted us as human subjects—as one of the *necessary conditions of success* for the ethical project of relating ourselves to the time of the new.

My final suggestion in this project is that this *ethos* that Deleuze and Guattari develop in relation to the problem of history has much to offer to contemporary politico-philosophical projects seeking to model themselves on Bergson's and Levinas' respective conceptions of temporal ethics. It seems to me that by accepting, like Deleuze and Guattari do, that history must always remain a constitutive part of ethics—that no ethics can every fully isolate or uproot itself from history—that contemporary appropriations of Bergson and Levinas could also begin to think a way out of the problems that I have here shown to persist in those two ethical philosophies. By acknowledging the constitutive role of history for ethics, those contemporary projects can perhaps begin to ensure that their efforts to relate ethical subjects to the new do not succumb—simply by virtue of their inattention to the historical—to the worst of the many risks that such a project can involve. Even if, as Deleuze and Guattari continually remind us, there are never any guarantees that this negotiation will succeed.

This would not necessitate the formulation of Bergsonian or Levinasian conceptions of the BwO or the plane of consistency. Instead, it would simply require the adoption of a two-fold recognition. First, it would involve acknowledging that history or actuality is not necessarily a hindrance or a blockage to a relation to the future.[1] As inflexible and violent as they might at first appear, socio-historical manifestations and stratifications always form a relatively dynamic substrate which presents as many opportunities as it does hurdles for the

[1] Dennis Beach (2004: 326-237) directs a similar suggestion as Levinas(ians), arguing that it remains incumbent on those who follow Levinas that they not only "recognise some of his own categorical prejudices" relating to history, but that they also reconfigure his conception of history with a view to rediscovering "a reawakened awareness of the ethical proximity of history."

ethical project of relating oneself to the new. Secondly, incorporating Deleuze and Guattari's *ethos* would involve accepting that the success of temporal ethics always depends on a prudent and analytic *negotiation* of the opportunities and dangers that this historical substrate presents. That is to say, in order to relate ourselves to a novel future, we cannot *exclusively* direct our ethical 'attention' or 'intentionality' to a radically unforeseeable dimension of novelty. To successfully relate ourselves to the new, we must also remain *prudently* related to our past and present forms of actuality, for only in that way can we avoid the dangers that remain associated with the project of displacing our habitual forms of living. "In each case", as Deleuze and Guattari write in *Anti-Oedipus*, we must seek to relate to the future "by way of old lands, study their nature, their density; we must seek to discover how the machinic indices are grouped on each of these lands that permit going beyond them."[2] In short, to successfully relate ourselves to the future, we must not only remain ethically vigilant to the constitutive implication between temporal ethics and history, but we must also seek to *negotiate* the dangers and opportunities that this implication creates. "It would be worse without negotiation", as Derrida says.[3]

Now, it might be objected that these suggestions only function to collapse and reduce the *transcendent* distinctiveness of Levinas and Bergson's respective ethical philosophies. Does the appeal of those philosophies not rest precisely in their refusal to accept that temporal alterity—to remain *truly* novel—must precisely remain transcendent in relation to any form of worldly actuality? And am I not, by advancing the above suggestions on history, simply making the fairly uninteresting point that a transcendent temporal ethics can succeed only by becoming more *immanent*?

Not at all; and I believe the stakes of my suggestions can be clarified by a brief appeal to Derrida's late thought. When in *Spectres of Marx*, for example, Derrida considers the profoundly ethical task of how one should learn to "live otherwise", he argues that this task requires that one "learn spirits", that one learn to live with a paradoxical *spectral* presence

[2] AO 318.
[3] ATVM 185.

("*with* ghosts") that has neither "the actual or present reality of the present, [nor] everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality (…) and so forth."[4] Clearly, Derrida has something transcendent in mind when he speaks of the spectral in relation to ethics: learning how to live otherwise involves contending with a paradoxical presence that is beyond the presence of *this* world. This is not to suggest, however, that this paradoxical presence never finds itself implicated with any *history*. Indeed, as Derrida argues, the transcendent "non-presence of the spectre *demands* that one take its times and *its history* into consideration, the singularity of its temporality or of its *historicity*."[5] The spectre *has* a history, and that history must be accounted for, contended with. Moreover, even if this spectre always remains an event to-come—in the precise sense that it ruptures, interrupts and opens the present—its futurity nonetheless always makes an *apparition within a determined context*.[6] The spectre, like any future, Derrida says, "is something to-come (*il y a à venir*)", but this to-come is not "utopian, it is what takes place here and now, in a here and now that I regularly try to dissociate from the present."[7]

In my view, what Derrida signals in the space of these brief remarks is the possibility of a transcendent temporal ethics that remains attuned to its constitutive implication with the historical. To be sure, the formulation of such an ethics is not an easy philosophical task, since it requires the creation of new concepts that function to *dissociate* notions like history, actuality, and the 'here and now' from the traditional present-ness of the present.[8] But what Derrida's late thought suggests here is the idea that a transcendent ethics *need not* separate itself from all historical or actual content in order to uphold its status *qua* transcendent. A transcendent temporal ethics can remain simultaneously transcendent *and* attuned to the

[4] Derrida, 2006: xvi-xx, 48.
[5] Derrida, 2006: 126 (emphasis added).
[6] In this sense, the spectral's transcendence is perhaps best described as *quasi*-transcendental, meaning that as "the transcendental condition [for the opening] of a series [in this case, history, the spectral] is also, paradoxically, a part of that series, creating aporias for the constitution of any set or whole, particularly, of any historical configuration (age, *episteme*, paradigm, themata, epoch, and so on)." Derrida, 1994b: 235. For more on Derrida's concept of quasi-transcendence, see also: Bennington and Derrida, 1993: 267-284.
[7] Derrida, 1996: 85.
[8] Perhaps, this ethics also requires a new notion of transcendence *qua* quasi-transcendence.

fact that an ethical relation to a transcendent future always involves a certain history. Moreover, that ethics can remain transcendent *and* acknowledge that a relation to the future always takes place in the context of a given 'here and now'—with all the opportunities and dangers that this process of contextualisation involves.

And it is in this spirit, I suggest, that my above suggestions for Levinas' and Bergson's temporal ethics should be received. Far from recommending that they rid themselves of their transcendent distinctiveness in favour of a Deleuzo-Guattarian immanence, I simply suggest that they accept the latter's *ethos* of generalised prudence with regards to the determined forms of actuality with which any temporal ethics will inevitably find itself implicated. What we must take from Deleuze and Guattari's ethics is not its relentless immanent bent, but the dual recognition that the task of relating oneself to the new implicates a certain history, and that this constitutive implication creates as many opportunities and it does blockages for the project of temporal ethics. In short, in order to continue relating ourselves to the new, we also have to prudently involve ourselves with those forms of actuality that have historically constituted us as ethical subjects. Or, as Foucault once said: "the future is something we do. The future is the manner in which we react to what is happening, it is the manner in which we transform an actual movement or question into effect. If we want to become masters of our future, we need to fundamentally pose the question about the today."[9]

[9] Foucault, 1994: 434 (my translation).

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